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Manichaean Gnosis and Creation Myth

by
Abolqasen Esmailpour

Victor H. Mair, Editor
Sino-Platonic Papers
Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6305 USA
vmair@sas.upenn.edu
www.sino-platonic.org

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Manichaean Gnosis and Creation Myth

by
Abolqasem Esmailpour[1]

[1] Abolqasem Esmailpour, born in 1954, is Professor in the Persian Literature Department, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran. He has been teaching as a visiting professor at the Faculty of Oriental Languages and Literatures, Shanghai International Studies University in China since 2004. He has published other books and papers on Eastern mythology and Iranian studies.

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Foreword

Among various narratives of cosmology throughout the world Manichaean creation myth is undoubtedly unique and significant. In the first chapter, before entering the fantastic imaginary scenario of Manichaean creation myth, I attempt to shine a new light on the cultural, artistic and literary reflections of Manichaean Gnosis and its roots in Iranian culture as an introduction to an Iranian approach to Gnosticism.

However, my main motive is to supply various texts on creation myth or cosmogonical process in Manichaeism. In addition, I found it necessary to coordinate and reconstruct the myth based up on various multilingual texts, such as Parthian, Middle and Classical Persian, Sogdian, Syriac, Coptic, Uigurian, Chinese and Arabic texts, translating these into a fluent narrative. This is provided extensively in the second chapter. Most of the texts referred to throughout the present work are available in my other books: *Ostūre-ye Āfarīnesh dar Ā'īn-e Mānī (The Myth of Creation in Manichaeism*, 2nd edn., 3rd print., Tehran: Cāravān Books, 2004), and *Adabīyyāte Mānavī (Manichaean Literature)* written in collaboration with Professor Mehrdād Bahār (Tehran: Kārnāmeh, 2005). Titles of the original texts referred to are listed at the end of this book.

The third chapter, "Mani's Pictorial Manifesto", contains a pictorial analysis of Manichaean cosmogony based on the surviving texts, including Classical Persian fragments explaining the precious paintings, some of which survive on the walls of

Manichaean monasteries, and also on silk, leather and paper materials found in historical sites in the oasis of Turfan in China.

In the fourth chapter, the role of a significant Manichaean deity, the Beloved of the Lights, in the Process of Cosmogony is discussed through a comparative study of Middle Persian, Parthian, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic and Farsi texts showing the deity as the first direct emanation of the Second Creation.

In the fifth chapter, Manichaean gods and goddesses mentioned in a unique classical Arabic treatise are discussed. The treatise, *Kitāb al-Radd-i 'al'al-Zandīq al-La'īn Ibn-i Muqaffa'(The Book of Refutation against the Damned Zandīq Ibn-i Muqaffa')* was composed by Qāsim Ibn-i Ibrāhīm (d. 246AH / 848AD). The references to seven Manichaean deities are faced with their specific functions. Different functions and characteristics of the deities are surveyed and analysed through a study of the original Manichaean texts, which leads us to find some new specifications.

In the final chapter, Rūmī's prologue to the *Mathnawī* (the poet's masterpiece of the world of mysticism) and its Gnostic roots in some surviving pieces of Middle Persian, Parthian and Coptic sources, especially hymns and prayers, as well as Manichaean psalms, the scope of a comparative study in which the motifs of pre-Islamic Gnostic hymns are analysed. In addition, the themes have been compared with the main content of the prologue to the *Mathnawī*, which leads us to find some common features between Gnostic-mystical motifs of early Christianity and the Muslim mystical literary works. At the end, this sheds a new light on the continuity of the Gnostic-mystical tradition in the broad realm of Christianity, Manichaeism and Islam.

Here, I must offer many thanks to Professor Werner Sundermann, of the German Academy of Human Sciences in Berlin, for his valuable suggestions.

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A. Esmailpour
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I

Manichaean Gnosis:
An Introduction to Its Iranian Cultural, Artistic and Literary Reflections

The rise of Manichaeism in the 3rd century AD has had multiple and widespread representations and reflections in human culture. Its effects can be seen in religious, social, cultural, artistic and literary aspects of human life. The most important and durable representation of Manichaeism is its gnostic aspect, which influenced Persian mysticism after Islam and is still alive as a mystic viewpoint. Manichaeism changed into a widespread religion from the 3rd to the 9th centuries AD. It dominated a vast geographical area that extended from China in the east and to Byzantium and the Roman Empire in the west. Then it continued its religious life as dispersed and transformed sects in Iran, Mesopotamia and some other parts of the world. However, what survives now from Manichaean religious institutions is not notable. Its significance, of course, rests on its later gnostic, cultural and literary influences. Here, after an introduction to Manichaean gnosis, we survey only its Iranian cultural, artistic and literary reflections.

Manichaean Gnosis

The most important feature of Manichaean religion is the idea of gnostic redemption. Thus, its gnostic aspect bears a specific significance. Contrary to Marcion, who said that redemption is

feasible only through faith and divine grace, Mani believed that gnosis and the waking up of the material forgetfulness are the factors of redemption. So, Mani thought of a complex and deep cosmogony which, although affected by mythology, had a marvelous structure and relied on astronomy to some extent.

Manichaeism was deeply a gnostic doctrine. Mani preferred wisdom, knowledge or gnosis to faith and tradition, as we see in one of his writings, which has survived in a Middle Persian fragment (*M 49 II*):

> Now Self (*Narjamīg* 'Twin') goes with me (is with me), bears and guards me, with his force I strive with *Āz* (the Greed Demon) and *Ahreman* (the Devil), and I teach the people wisdom and knowledge, and I release them from *Āz* and *Ahreman*. And I accepted this thing (matter) of gods, wisdom and the knowledge of *Ruwānčīnīh* (gathering the souls), which was from *Narjamīg* (Twin)...[1]

In addition, Mani always emphasized wisdom, books, knowledge and allegories in his books and preachings. However, the wisdom which Mani suggested was based on revelation and illumination.

Mani himself was a member of the Mughtasila ('the Baptizers') sect in his youth. His gnostic adept was al-Khasīḥ ('Alkasai or Alchsaius'). One of the problems which caused Mani to separate himself from the sect was that he opposed baptizing the body and taking part in daily baptism. He believed that the true baptism is possible only through gnosis and knowledge. In other words, he suggested spiritual baptism and preferred it to the baptism of the body. He said:

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[1] *'wm nwnc xwd 'b'g rwyd, 'wm xwd d'ryd 'wd p'yd 'wš pd zwr 'b'g ''z 'wd 'hrmyn qwšym. 'wd mrdwm'n xrd 'wd d'nyšn hmwcym, 'wš'n 'c ''z 'wd 'hrmyn bwzym. 'wd mn 'yn xyr 'y yzd'n, 'wd xrd 'wd d'nyšn 'yg rw'ncynyh, 'ym 'c h'n nrjmyg pdyrypt hynd,*...Cf. M. Boyce, *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian* (Leiden-Téhéran-Liège 1975), p. 31; M. Bahār and A. Esmailpour, *Adabīyyāt-e Mānavī* (*Manichaean Literature*) (Tehran 2005), p. 231.

> The purity spoken of [by Jesus] is therefore purity through *gnosis*. It consists of the separation of light from darkness, of life from death, of living water from the congealed.[1]

The 'living water' that is frequently mentioned in Manichaean writings is the spiritual water which causes the purification of human spirit and soul. The use of this term is metaphorical, a gnostic metaphor for the purification of the imprisoned soul and light.

The Middle Persian term *zīndag* ('living') is a relevant word in Manichaean texts denoting light-giver to all who attain the 'fruit of gnosis.' Mani also called his religion *dyn 'yg zyndg* ('living religion') and his Gospel bore the title of *`wnglywn zyndg* (*the Living Gospel*). Manichaeans have also called their prophet *zyndkkr* ('reviver'), because man will be gnostic and knowledgeable through His 'living word'.

Therefore, Manichaean gnosis was, on the one hand, wakeful and illuminating. It was a kind of gnosis that informed man of his true and righteous origin. For, in the Manichaean view, human beings are imprisoned in a world where light is mingled with darkness, and they should release themselves from darkness. The first covenant of this redemption is gnosis, that is, the consciousness of oneself and of the Father of Greatness (Mp. *pyd 'y wzwrgyh / zwrw'n*) or the God of Light, a transcendental deity who lives beyond this material cosmos, with whom mankind shares the same essence. Of course, only some light-filled and spiritual particles of his being, which are imprisoned in the 'jail of body', share the same essence as the deity. This imprisoned or banished essence, which is illustrated as a light-particle, is to be released through man's efforts to reach the gate of gnosis.

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[1] Cf. A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, "Der Kölner Mani-Kodex..., ed. der Seiten 72, 8-99, 9", *ZPE* 32 (1979), pp. 84, 9-16.

In Manichaean gnosis, there is not a word on the descent of spirit (*pneuma*) as the Gnostics of the second and the third century described it, but it shows the world as divided into two separate realms of light and darkness. Spirit itself is originally separated from Matter. Only the envy of the Devil and demons caused them to attack the World of Light. In this way, some light-particles were imprisoned by the demons; then the so-called period of 'mingling of light and darkness' began.

According to Manichaean cosmology, man was born out of this 'mingling period'. The human body is demonic but the human spirit is transcendental and celestial. Man should release this imprisoned soul in order to be redeemed. Otherwise, he would be reborn and would live in agony.

The longing for the Paradise of Light (Mp. *whyšt'w rwšn*) is one of the important themes of Manichaean gnosis. The only wish of the offended, alienated and miserable man in the material world is redemption, then joining the transcendental world, and standing in front of the Father of Greatness who is the supreme and unknown god of the Manichaean pantheon, a deity without any homogeneity with this material world. He lives in the transcendental kingdom, and he will meet the purified and redeemed souls and lights only at the end of the world. All released particles of light which have passed through the Moon to the Sun, and from the Sun to the New Paradise (Mp. *whyšt 'y nwg*)[1] - a temporary paradise until the end of the world - will join in the Paradise of Light. Then, the world becomes absolute light; darkness will be vanquished and the Devil will be imprisoned in a deep pit.

The redeeming process of Manichaean gnosis is different from the process explained in the other Gnostic schools. In Mani's view, redemption will be possible through a complicated process. This

[1] *'wd 'br h'n dysm'n 'y nwg, h'n whyšt 'y nwg kwn*...(and make that New Paradise over that new building...). Cf. M. Boyce, *op. cit.*, p. 66; M. Bahār and A. Esmailpour, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

process will take a mythical form because Manichaean gnosis is knotted with the world of myths and is inseparable from it. Hence, to describe the quality of redemption and soul salvation, we have to draw upon a mythical commentary that is presented in the next chapter. Understanding Manichaean gnosis requires a vast awareness of Manichaean mythology. Mani himself had a mythological analysis of the world and the whole galaxy. Unlike other significant gnostics of early Christianity who had analytical and philosophical minds, he was chiefly fascinated by myth and art. Even when he spoke of cosmogony and the creation process and wanted to present an astrological justification, he sometimes mixed astrological beliefs with mythological concepts of stars and planets. In addition, Mani transferred a deep Gnostic belief into an institutional religion that, indeed, lasted for centuries, but in the end it could not survive as such and was restored once again to the form of a Gnostic school.

One of the significant motifs in Manichaeism is the bondage of the Primordial Man (Mp. *`whrmyzdby*). He descends from the Realm of Light to participate in the battle against the Prince of Darkness at the border of Light and Darkness, because he has the responsibility of keeping the supreme Paradise in peace. The character and function of redemption and watching over the supreme Paradise for which he is responsible show the significance that Mani and other Manichaean gnostics assume for man. The Primordial Man is the symbol of the celestial perfect man, a concept that can be seen in the mysticism of the later periods. He is defeated in his combat and is imprisoned by the demons. Is not his defeat a symbol of man's *jihād* ('holy war') against concupiscence, sometimes symbolizing human defeat in a difficult passage? Manichaean gnostics have regarded the bondage of Primordial Man as a symbol of the human soul imprisoned in the material world. They said that human salvation at the hand of the Redeemer

in itself signifies the salvation and the release of the soul imprisoned in the body.

On the other hand, as the Primordial Man fell unconscious into the depth of darkness, and neither heard nor saw anything, which the Manichaean gnostics interpreted as the forgetfulness, blindness and deafness of man in the material world. The forgotten blind and deaf man, in their view, has fallen into the depth of darkness or into this earthly inferior world, and there is no hope for his salvation. Thus, a large number of prayers, hymns and poems composed by Manichaean gnostics, as well as gnostics of other schools, describe the human sorrow of alienation, forgetfulness and bewilderment.

The Five Elements (Mp. *'mhrspnd'n*), Five Sons of the Primordial Man who also took part at the battle against the powers of darkness, are swallowed and imprisoned by the demons. Although a deity of light is defeated at the first combat of Light and Darkness, this event permits the Paradise of Light to be secured from the aggression of the Devil (Mp. *'hrmyn*) and the Demons (Mp. *dyw'n*). In fact, the Five Sons of Light are sacrificed in order that the supreme Realm of Light will not be the battlefield of the demons. In addition, the Five Sons of Light are of the same essence as the Living Spirit (Mp. *myhr yzd*) who plays a significant role in the creation process. The human soul is made up of the light-particles of these deities. Therefore, man, in spite of his demonic and evil body, has a precious essence imprisoned in him. His apprehension should be the release of this essence. This essence has been compared to a pearl by Manichaeans and other gnostics. It is strikingly similar to the idea presented by Hāfiz, the great Iranian poet, about ten centuries later:

> The pearl that was out of the oyster of the abode of time and space (universe)

It was sought of by the lost beings of the coastline[1]

The essence or pearl is the same light-particle that, in the Manichaean gnostic view, is imprisoned in the oyster-body of man, while it does not belong to the 'oyster of the universe'. The bondage of this essence is not the sign of defeat, but a gnostic symbol and allegory of the spiritually devoted life. It is the sweet final salvation that makes man suffer the anguish of his dark and material body in order to be released from bondage and to find eternal salvation. This immortal salvation is better than the agony of 'suffering the body's load', as Khayyām says:

> No longer can I live without the pure wine
> I cannot suffer the body's load without drinking wine![2]

Thus, the agonized soul finally will be saved. His salvation is at the hand of a powerful and light-embodied deity, the Living Spirit. Although he begins the process of redemption, and organizes some of the light from the first conflict, the bulk of imprisoned light remains to be redeemed by later divine activity. However, he is the symbol of salvation of the jailed Primordial Man, and the creator and arranger of the cosmos with ten firmaments and eight earths; he is also the suppressor of the realm of the demons and the destroyer of the savages and their rebellion.

The salvation of the imprisoned soul is considered one of the fundamental motifs of Manichaean gnosis, such that "the release of the Primordial Man from the bondage of hell" (Mp. *t'r zmyg* 'the Land of Darkness') in the Manichaean view enjoyed the same significance as Christ's ascension in Christianity. To Manichaeans,

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[1] Gowharī kaz sadaf-e kown-o makān bīrūn būd / Talab az gom shodegān-e lab-e daryā mīkard. *Dīvān-e Hāfiz*, ed. by Qazvīnī and Ghanī (Tehran 1993), p. 101.
[2] Man bī mey-e nāb zīstan natvānam / Bī bāde keshīd-e bār-e tan natvānam, 'U. Khayyām, *The Rubā'īyyāt* (Tehran 2003), p. 89.

the release of the Primordial Man was not considered a fact related to the past, but as a symbolic and eternal example; it was also the guarantor of heavenly salvation of all people and, in the eyes of the believers, an indisputable fact, because the agony and the final salvation of the Primordial Man was considered an example of human destiny."[1]

The mythological commentary of the imprisonment of the soul and its salvation in Manichaeism is that gnosis or the mystery of the truth is not explicable through logical and deductive methods. The deciphering of the mystery is possible, however, through meditation, revelation and an intuition resulting from illumination. Although Mani emphasizes 'wisdom, reason and reasoning', his 'wisdom' is illuminative and revelatory. So, in his point of view, myth has also a fundamental role in explaining the truth, because myth has also a symbolic, mysterious and illuminative expression. Gnostic truths are more explicable through symbols and parables. Parables have a significant role in Manichaean and other religious works.[2]

Achieving immortal life and victory is due to receiving gnosis and the 'living words', i.e. deciphering the myths and the mysteries of gnosis, the mysteries that Mani has deciphered in his *Living Gospel*. In one of his treatises, *Epistula Fundamenti* (Mp. *frwrdg 'y dw bwn*), we read:

> Mani, Apôtre de Jesus-Christ, par la Providence de Dieu le Père. Voici les Paroles du Salut, venant de la Source Eternelle et Vivante: celui qui les écoutera, qui les croira d'abord et ensuite conservera ce qu'elles auront mais au profound de luimême, celui-là ne sera jamais sujet à la mort, amis au contraire, il jouira de la Vie éternelle de Gloire. Car, assurément, il faut estimer

[1] M. Bahār amd A. Esmailpour, *op. cit.*, p. 179.
[2] For examples of these parables, see W. Sundermann, *Mittlepersische und partische kosmogonische und Parabeltexte der Manichäer* (Berlin 1973).

> bien heureux celui qui sera initié à la connaissance divine, puisque, libéré par elle, il sera établi dans la Vie sans fin.[1]

In the Manichaean view, as much as the soul is transcendent, divine and pure in its essence, the body is corrupted, demonic, abject and dirty. One of the most essential duties of a Manichaean believer is mortification and abjection of the body. A Manichaean Elect (Mp. *wycydg*) makes the body abject body by following stringent rules, so that he should eat a meal only once a day, a vegetarian meal that is supplied by the Hearers (Mp. *nywš'g'n*). He should put on just a single garment during a year. He must not kill or torture a beast, not break a branch of a plant. He is not permitted to possess anything, and he must fast many days during the year. All these rigidities are so that he will abstain from the material world. Manichaean elects must even refrain from marriage, because they thought that reproduction caused more light-particles to be imprisoned in the bodies of the offspring. However, free relationships were seen among Manichaean men and women. We know through Manichaean scriptures and some artworks that there were ladies who tended to Manichaeism and were considered as members of the Manichaean distinguished classes.[2]

To be redeemed from the hell of the body, one should be knowledgeable and wakened by the redeeming deities. One of the most important redeeming gods is Jesus, who has three unique characteristics as follows:

1) *Jesus the Splendour* (Mp. *yyšw' zyw'(h) / xrdyšhryzd*), who is one of the significant redeeming deities in the Manichaean pantheon. He is a celestial god who is evoked at the third and

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[1] F. Decret, *Mani et la tradition manichéenne* (Paris 1974), p. 80.

[2] For instance, a fragment of a Manichaean miniature (IB 4937) discovered in Qočo shows a row of distinguished ladies, crowned and richly dressed in splendid costumes. Cf. H.-J. Klimkeit, *Manichaean Art and Calligraphy* (Leiden 1982), pp. 40-41.

final phase of creation. He presents 'gnosis' to Adam (Mp. *ghymwrd*) and awakens him from the 'sleep of death'. Adam wakes up and knows his savior. Through him, he sees the celestial god and heavenly Father. He also sees "his own Self cast into the teeth of panthers and elephants, being devoured by them – what a devouring! - consumed by them, eaten by the dogs, mingled and bound in everything and finally, imprisoned in the stench of darkness. He raised him up and made him eat of the Tree of Life. Then, Adam cried and lamented: smote his breast, and spoke: 'woe, woe unto the shaper of my body, unto those who fettered my soul, and unto the rebels that enslaved me!'"[1] Jesus the Splendour, according to Manichaean gnosis, is the source of all human revelations. He has the function of providing consciousness and of awakening the seekers of the true path who slumber in this earthly world.

2) *The Suffering Jesus* (Lt. *Jesus Patibilis*). The name used in Western Manichaean writings for the Living Self (Mp. *gryw zyndg*, i.e. the sum of the light suffering in matter), crucified as Jesus was crucified on the cross. The Suffering Jesus has a divine representation and is considered a Manichaean deity. He is also as the light-particle imprisoned in the body.
3) *Jesus the Messiah (Mp. yyšw' mšyh')*. Prophet and Son of God, who had taken on the appearance of man and according to the Christians, had been crucified due to man's sins. Mani himself had opposed the idea of real incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He believed in His spiritual crucifixion, i.e. Messiah's ascension to heaven, as the later Islamic view confirms too.

These three conceptions of Jesus are not always kept wholly distinct. Mani knew himself as Paraclete and the first successor of

[1] Theodore bar Konai, quoted from: H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston, 2nd edn., 3rd pri., 1970), pp. 86-87.

Jesus Christ, and held high regard for the Buddha and Zoroaster. He clearly had full knowledge of Christ and, to some extent, of the two other prophets.

What Jesus the Splendour taught man is: the theme of three periods of Before, Middle, and After. In the Primordial Period, i.e. the golden era of separation of light and darkness, the cosmos is completely light-filled. The deities and spiritual particles are in the Paradise of Light in absolute peace. The Middle Period is the mingled era of light and darkness, a period that human beings live in and during which the heavenly light-particles are still imprisoned in this world. The Final Period is the Resurrection Day when the imprisoned particles of light will be released and will ascend up to heaven, and Darkness will be defeated. All the impurities will be burnt in a great conflagration, and finally the world will be light-filled and heavenly again.

With this knowledge, the seeker reaches the 'fruit of gnosis'. This is by itself a kind of rebirth, a new life in the Realm of Light and Truth.

In one of his *Epistles*, Mani writes on the redemption of soul and the divine origin of man:

> Mani, Apôtre de Jésus Christ, à sa fille Menoch: sur toi la Grâce et le Salut de notre Dieu, Lui qui assurément est le vrai Dieu. Qu'il illumines lui-même ton âme et qu'il te révèle sa Justice, car tu es le fruit de la Race divine....Tu es rendue à ta splendeur quand tu reconnais ce que tu as d'bord ètè, comment tu es émanée de ce genre d'âmes répandues dans tous les corps, dans la saveur des choses, attachées aux diverses espéces d'êtres. Arrache enfin la Racine souche maudite et alors, à l'instant, tu pourras te contempler toi-même, toute spirituelle.[1]

[1] F. Decret, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93.

The Manichaean gnostic and disciple's final wish is: reaching the Paradise of Light and standing in front of the Father of Greatness in the World of Transcendence, in the garment of light, and becoming absolute light. The wish for a merely spiritual and lightful world, the longing for becoming god-like, without any kind of evilness, blurring or darkness are among the purest intentions of a Manichaean disciple. He will get his wish on the Resurrection Day, a day when the multiple firmaments and earths will be cast down, and a great conflagration will burn all the evils and dark-particles. The last light-particles will be refined and will join the New Paradise. Then, the New Paradise will attach to the Paradise of Light or the Paradise of Transcendence. All things will become absolute light. There will be nothing except light.

Cultural Reflections

The cultural origin of Manichaeism was first in Babylonia and Mesopotamia. Mani, although of an Iranian monarchy family, was nurtured in the Gnostic society of Babylonia. However, Manichaeism and its religious-gnostic ideas, when they reached the territory of Persia, naturally took on a Persian tincture. This can be clearly seen through the terms and the nomenclature of Manichaean deities such as Zurwān, Ohrmizdbay, Mihr Yazd, etc.[1] One can see Iranian cultural influence on Manichaeism through its original themes and motifs and also through the functions of the deities. Zoroastrian dualistic doctrine and its impact on the Manichaean approach are undeniable. The specific functions of deities such as Zurwān and Mihr Yazd and their reflections on

[1] But these names are found only in the Middle Iranian translations of Mani's works, and the literature that developed among his Iranian followers. The original names and terms were Syriac, not Iranian, and did not include any of these Iranian deity names. Additionally, Mani himself made the first efforts at applying such names to the Manichaean pantheon in his *Šābuhragān*. Here I thank Dr. Jason Beduhn for his note on Iranian deities' names.

Manichaeism are noticeable as well. In other words, the characteristics and functions of Zoroastrian deities match those of the Manichaean deities that were given their names. For instance, Zurwān, according to Iranian and Armenian source materials, is a God of Time with an unlimited realm who is the origin of Ohrmazd and Ahriman, twin gods of Good and Evil. In this way, Ohrmizdbay of Manichaean cosmogony is comparable with Zoroastrian Ohrmazd. The former is the symbol of forgetfulness and gaining knowledge to be redeemed, and he is the first deity to fight with Ahriman, while the latter is the Lord of knowledge and wisdom and is in conflict with Ahriman too.

On the other hand, Mihr Yazd of Manichaean cosmogony is comparable to Iranian Avestan Mithra to some extent. The former is the savior of Ohrmizdbay and together with his Five Sons fights with demonic powers, while one main function of the latter is also fighting with evil power, and we can see the Avestic *vərəθraγna* (Varahrān or Bahrām), god of war, among his companions.[1]

We also see Manichaean cultural representation in Iran during the first centuries of the Islamic period. Although Manichaean religious practice could not be as effective in Iranian religious life during the Islamic era, it had a deep affect in the cultural dimension. Mani himself was an expert intellectual and artist who had an undeniable and durable influence on Iranian culture through writing gnostic works, as well as through his paintings, calligraphy and tadhīb ('book-gilding').

The negation of earthly life and the rejection of body and materiality in the Manichaean gnostic attitude have much in common with the ascetic themes, piety and rejection of self and sensuality in the Islamic attitude – especially in its Sufistic and mystical approaches. This attitude, in spite of the belief regarding

[1] Cf. I. Gershewitch, *An Avestan Hymn to Mithra* (Cambridge, Mass. 1954), pp. 28ff.

Manichaeism as a religion with pessimistic views, is not so pessimist as it appears at the first glance. The object of the rejection of the world and worldly inferiorities, in the Manichaean viewpoint, is to reach a deeper and more aesthetic world, and it is originally an optimistic attitude. Longing for a pure and absolute intellectual life is a wish not unshared with the prophets, mystics and significant intellectuals of every period.

Gnosticism has vast, multiple, and even universal aspects. Some scholars regard it as a universal religion that once influenced both the western and eastern world,[1] and even now it can be a response to some ideological and cultural quests at the dawn of the third millennium.

Manichaeism was also a widespread universal religion in specific periods. It was influential in Iran, Central Asia, India and China as well as in Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Byzantium, Rome and even Africa in the west. One of the characteristics of the religion was that wherever it reached, at once it accepted the local religious features and absorbed its cultural elements. This influence was, of course, mutual, i.e. in addition to the absorption of cultural motifs and themes, Manichaean themes themselves also affected the culture and art of that region. Manichaean intellectuals and mystics in addition to mutual religious-cultural influences were the best specimens of dialogue among civilizations.

Gnostic religion has been regarded as a universal phenomenon because it was based on personal specific experience and says that the discovery of truth is possible only through illuminative and apocalyptic wisdom, a religious experience which does not belong to a special theology or philosophy, but which designates a free-thinking gnosis and attitude. All the gnostics agree that the world is not perfect. Nobody has reached the final redemption through

[1] Of these scholars, Hans Jonas should be noted. See his *Gnostic Religion* (Boston 1970).

'worldly affairs'. Hafiz of Shiraz also explained the theme with a sigh:

> The world and worldly affairs are nonsense
> One thousand times have I sought for.[1]

In the view of Hafiz, the nothingness of world affairs is not pessimistic at all but it is essentially longing for a heavenly, transcendental and spiritual world. Therefore, this is the right sort of deep optimism in the world of ideology. Manichaean gnosis also does not reject the world through considering 'the world and worldly affairs' as evil, but it wishes a heavenly, splendid and intellectual universe. Since one cannot reach it in this material world, it should be sought in the heavens, where gods, deities and angels live in a halo of absolute light, which is the right dwelling of the transcendent and gnostic man.

This gnostic belief is seen in the essence of most religions and sects. It has been represented as Cabbalistic mysticism in Judaism; as gnostic faiths and schools in Christianity; as seeing the world afflicted, the bondage of the chain of rebirth, the release of this causal circle or *Saṃsāra*, and reaching *Nirvāna* in Buddhism; as gnostic sects and schools, and Islamic mystic sects such as Zanādiqa, Ismā`īlīyya and Shi'ite Gholāt, etc., which we will discuss later.

Eastern Europe was a refuge of the gnostics and heretics of the Medieval Ages. During the fourth and the fifth centuries, Armenia was a region secure from church cruelties for gnostics such as the followers of Marcion and Mani.[2]

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[1] Jahān-o kār-e jahān jomle hīč dar hīč ast / Hezār bār man īn nokte karde'am tahqīq. *Dīvān-e Hāfiz*, ed. Qazvīnī and Ghanī (Tehran 1993), p. 214.

[2] Cf. J. Petro Culiano, "Gnosticism from Middle Ages to the Present Day", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade (New York, London 1987), vol. 5, pp. 575f.

Shi'ite Gholāt established different extremist sects who believed "one of Ali's offspring has been gifted with divinity. For a long time after his death, they were waiting for his resurrection such as with Jesus. Today, their last remnants are the Syrian Nuṣairīyya or the Alavians. The treatise of the *Umm'al-Kitāb*, composed at the end of the 2nd century AH / 8th century AD, belongs to the 'Gholāt of Kūfa'. It consists of an apocalypse with vivid gnostic motifs"[1]

In mystical exegeses of the first centuries after Islam, the term N*ūr al-Azalīyya'* (the Eternal Light) has been frequently discussed. For instance, in an exegesis ascribed to Imām Ja`far Ṣādiq, the interpretation of '*Nūn wa'l-Qalam*' we read:

> *Nūn, huwa nūr al-azalīyya, al-ladhī ikhtara`a min al-akwān kulluhā faj`al dhālik li- Muḥammad ṣa'l-Allāhu 'alayh*
>
> "He is the eternal light of which all the beings are originated. So, it was established for Muhammad, Peace Be upon Him."[2]

It is obvious that the 'Eternal Light' is a key figure in Manichaean and Mandaean gnosis. The Realm of Light or Light Paradise is the final redemption. The Eternal Light, in Islamic mystical exegeses, has a fundamental theme that is occasionally mentioned as '*Nūr-i Muḥammadīyya*' (*Muhammadan Light*). Also in Manichaeism, the Father of Greatness radiates his eternal light and creates divinities such as the Primordial Man who evokes Five Light-Sons.

Cultural reflection of Gnosticism in Iran and the Islamic world began at the end of the third century AD after Mani's death. Manichaeans did not withstand the affliction and execution brought by Zoroastrian fanatic clergymen during Bahrām and Shābūhr II reigns and fled to Transoxiana. In the 6th century AD,

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 576.

[2] "Exegesis ascribed to Imām Ja`far Ṣādiq", in *Collected Works of 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sulamī*, ed. Paul Noya, 2nd ed., (Tehran 1994), vol. 1, p. 48.

the eastern branch of Manichaeism led by Mār Šād Ōhrmizd was established, a sect which was known as Dēnāwarīyya. In the 5th century AD, the religion of Mazdak built upon the Manichaean dualism of light and darkness and transformed it into a vast social, religious and cultural movement in Sassanian Iran. Even before Mazdak, a person named Bundos – who was undoubtedly related to a Gnostic sect – arose and spoke of the conflict of the realms of light and darkness, thought of a social reformation and promised a classless society. Later, in the Islamic period, Abū Muslim of Khurāsān was also accused of having esoteric thoughts. The social and historical consequences of Gnosticism are much more extensive. However, historical background is not the aim of this chapter.

Ismāīlī gnosis and one of its significant branches, '*Zanādiqa*', in the third century AD were founded by Abdullāh Khūzī. Later the Fatimīd and the Qirmatīs also sprouted as branches of the Ismāīlī Zandīqs. In the 5th century AH /11th AD a sect called Drūziyya 'the Diruzīs' (or better Iranian pronounced '*Darzīyān*' = the sewers) originated from them, a sect whose followers are still living in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. In the 6th century AH /12th AD the sect of '*Malaḥida*', a branch of Ismāīlī Qirmatīs appeared. All these sects had Gnostic ideas. One of the oldest works of the Ismāīlītes, '*Kitāb al-Kashf*' (*the Book of Revelation*) is about creation and cosmology. It describes a kind of mythology with Gnostic-Manichaean features.[1]

Gnostic myths were very likely transmitted to the 'Gholāt of Shī'ite' and the Ismāīlītes via 'the Mawālī' of Iran, a group who converted to Islam during the reign of Banī `Umayya 'the Umayyīd. They preserved original Iranian customs and traditions. Henceforth, the Islamic world was directly influenced by

[1] Cf. A. Esmailpour, (ed. and tr.), *Ā'īn-e Gnosī va Mānavī* (*Gnosticism and Manichaeism*) (Tehran 1994), p. 60.

Manichaeism and gnostic ideas. These ideas by themselves had cultural reflections as well.[1]

Abū 'Isā Warrāq, Ibn-i Rāvandī, Bashshār ibn-i Burd, Isḥāq ibn-i Khalaf and Ibn-i Sīyābe, most Bamakīds, the most significant of them Faḍl ibn-i Barmakī, were among the Manichaean Zandīqs of Islamic era to whom Ibn-i Nadīm clearly referred in his *al-Fihrist*.[2] Of course, it is noticeable that the Zanādiqa were not exactly Manichaeans, but their esoteric thoughts had Manichaean-Mazdakī features, and they hid their pan-Iranistic and nationalistic attitudes behind them. Being Zandīq meant by itself opposition to the predominant political system and government.

Such a judgement can be true also of Ismāīlī gnosis. Henry Corbin, who has comprehensively researched Ismāīlī gnosis, believes that "Shī'īte gnosis in general, and Ismāīlī gnosis in particular, cannot be conceived simply as a continuation of ancient gnosis. It follows a path that is purely its own, eliminating some themes while it assimilates and transforms other perfectly recognizable ones".[3]

Therefore, we cannot deny the presence of old gnosis and mysticism in Iranian culture, but its quality and functions should be considered. Iranian Gnosticism is related with the intellectual elects. It is not a school of thought for the masses. Old mystics called it 'ilm al-bātin 'esoteric science' and elm al-yaqīn 'science of truth' that are for redemption of the soul. Spiritual birth 'wilāda rūḥānīyya' is possible in the world of exegesis 'ta'wīl', while bodily birth 'wilāda jismānīyya' takes place in the world of revelation 'tanzīl' from heaven. 'Tanzīl' in Corbin's words, "is a figurative shape and 'Ta'wīl' is a spiritual exegesis. They are two opposed poles. Etymologically 'Ta'wīl' means 'to bring back or lead back to', i.e., to bring literal forms 'ẓāhir, sharī`a (appearance,

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[1] Cf. R. Nicholson, *Mystics of Islam* (London 1970), pp. 14-20.
[2] Ibn-i Nadīm, *al-Fihrist* (Tehran 1978), p. 660.
[3] H. Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismāīlī Gnosis* (London 1983), p. 153.

Law) back to the plane of spiritual Truth 'ḥaqīqa'. By this exegesis, Ismāīlism transforms the literal forms of Koranic Revelation in the same way that the gnosis of antiquity worked with the given forms of Christianity: it performs a transformation of all these forms, events, and persons into symbols. In so doing, it realizes a transmutation of the soul, its resurrection ('qīyāma') – and thereby bears the fundamental feature that relates it to the other forms of gnosis."[1]

The oldest gnostic treatise of the Islamic period, *Umm'al-Kitāb* 'the Mother-Book') was composed in the 2nd century AH / 8th century AD. The author, 'Abu'l Khaṭṭāb', was one of Imām Ja`far Ṣādiq's devoted disciples. Later, the Ismāīlītes knew themselves as the spiritual offspring of the same Abu'l Khaṭṭāb, regarding him as loyal to His Majesty Ismā`īl', the son of Imām Ja`far Ṣādiq.

There are some Gnostic motifs, but with different specifications, that can be seen in the religious-mystical works of Islamic period. How they are reflected in the source materials depends on different mystical schools. Gnosticism expressed in the *Umm'al-Kitāb* is different from the doctrine described through Ismāīlī works of the Fatimīd period. For instance, the structure of paradise and the celestial essence described in the works of Nāṣir Khusrow is different from the parallel view in Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī's works.

Proto-Ismāīlītes emphasized the case of individual redemption and knew their school as the religion of resurrection 'dīn-i qīyāma', i.e. the resurrection and release of the soul from the material body. This influenced all Iranian Sufistic attitudes. Even the 'mystical secret' ('sirr-i 'irfānī') ascribed to Shams-i Tabrīzī, recorded in the *Walad-Nāmeh* composed by Sultān-i Walad, the son of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, has its exact equivalence in the commentary on the *Khuṭbat*

[1] *Ibid.*

al-Bayān (*'Sermon of Expression'*) which Ismāīlī tradition has attributed to Ḥassan Ṣabbāḥ[1]

On the other hand, Ismālī 'ḥikma' (philosophy) contains Islamic gnosis. It is a kind of gnosis that, in the view of Ismāīlī 'ḥukamā' (philosophers), should present spiritual redemption, and it is possible through illumination and epiphany of the soul. The soul's redemption has common points with the *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (the philosophy of Illumination) of Suhrawardī and the *Ḥikma* (*philosophy*) of Ibn-i Arabi.

The theory of ''uqūl' (intelligences) or 'malā'ika' (angels) of Avecinna is substituted for "a succession of *syzygies* that correspond to the structure of the major Gnostic systems. From each Intelligence (`ql), Nous, or Cherub 'karrūb' there proceeds a soul (nafs) that forms a couple with it.... The name of the first of these Cherubs, Wajh al-Quds ('the Holy Face') corresponds to that of the first hypostasis (the Monogenes) in *the Excerpta* of Theodotus: the 'Face of the Father'. The *Taṣawwurāt* (*'Concepts'*) of Nāṣir al-Dīn-i Ṭūsi preserves the same schema, although there it is complicated by the fact that not only the Intelligence, but also the Soul produces acts of contemplation that gives rise to being."[2]

The classes of Ismāīlī 'ukhuwwa' ('brethren') and human characters have spiritual and celestial aspects. For instance, Nāṭiq or the 'Enunciating' is the Prophet ('Nabī') or the First Nous (`Aql-i Awwal') and his spiritual successor or Waṣī ('heir'), that establishes the foundation of Imāmat (leadership), is the Second Nous (`ql-i thānī). Henry Corbin believes that the idea that "an earthly person may represent or typify a heavenly hypostasis also occurs in Medieval Latin Gnosticism."[3]

The second Nous can be conceived as the world spirit that, with the First Nous, makes the eternal couple, or Intelligence and Soul.

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[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 156-157.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

The First Nous is Nāṭiq ('Ennunciating') and the Second is Ṣāmit ('Acute'). So, the Soul is not completely perfect and there is the possibility of fall in it.

Seyyed Aḥmad 'Alavī, one of the significant disciples of Mīr Dāmād (11th century AH / 17th century AD), found a relationship between old Iranian Zurvanism and this notion that "with the unfolding of the First Intelligence there emerges a shadowy dimension (its aspect of non-being, inasmuch as its being is not necessary in itself), a shadow that goes on growing and intensifying until the tenth and last Intelligence (`ql-i 'āshir). To be sure, this comparison does involve a profound modification of Zurvanism, by delaying somewhat the moment at which the Zurvanite schema makes its appearance (since Zurwān here becomes an angel in the Pleroma, rather than the absolute godhead). Moreover, this is the same transposition that one also finds in the cosmic dramaturgy of Ismāīlism, and the shift had already taken place in the doctrine of the Zurvanites (Zurvaniyya) and the Gayōmartians (Kiumarthiyya), as that was described by Shahristānī. This transposition must be listed among those characteristics differentiating Ismāīlī gnosis from dualism in general. Here the crisis that gives birth to Darkness is conceived as situated within the Pleroma – but only so that Darkness may be overcome and banished from it, as soon as it has emerged. That is why the Intelligence who will assume the role of the Demiurge in Ismāīlī gnosis has none of the disquieting traits of an Ialdabaoth, any more than the Angels governing the celestial spheres resemble hostile Archons. On the contrary, the notion of angelic *tarbīya* or pedagogy (already indicated in the *Mi'rāj-Nāma* or *the Book of Ascension* attributed to Avecinna) shows the angels ready to come to the aid of the gnostic in order to help him to 'escape', to return 'home' and carry out his mystical *mir'āj*. Instead, the demonic

force is on the earth, where it manifests itself in the implacable battle carried on by the opponents of Imām."[1]

The Tenth Nous, or the "active intelligence of philosophers, is seen in Ismāīlism. In the mystical traditions of Avecinna and Suhrawardī, the personal relationship of this Nous with a mystic and the role of his celestial pedagogy are decisive. The Tenth Nous is the end of a pilgrimage that is described in the *Treatise of Ghurbat al-Gharbīyya* in which some famous themes of Manichaean gnosis can be found: "the young man thrown into the bottom of a well, the Stranger who is reawakened to the awareness of his Self by a letter sent to him by his heavenly family, the stages of the pilgrimage of return, etc."[2]

One of the angels or the previously mentioned *'uqūls* (Intelligences), in philosophers' words, is Jibrā'īl, the revelation angel, or the same 'Rūḥ al-Qudus' ('the Holy Spirit') in Suhrawardī's words. He was called a human deity. This *'ql* in Ismaili religion, called 'Ādam-i Rūḥānīyya' ('the Spiritual Man') is the same Anthropos or the celebrated Primordial Man in different Gnostic schools. According to the philosophers' cosmogony, he descends from the third stage to the tenth stage of the angels and is the origin of sacred and mythical history. This spiritual man is the same celestial Messiah who has earthly representation.[3]

Abū Ḥatim Rāzī in *'Ālam al-Nubuwwa* (*'The World of Prophecy'*) and Abū Ya'qūb Sejestānī in *Ithbāt al-Nubuwwāt* *'The Proof of Prophecies'*) have presented different gnostic commentaries of the Gospels, especially the Gospel of Matthew.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 158.

[2] "*Risālat al-Ghurbat al-Gharbīyya*", in *Collected Philosophical and Mystic Works of Suhrawardī*, ed. Henry Corbin (Téhéran-Paris 1977), pp. 274-297; Cf. also H. Corbin, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

[3] H. Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismāīlī Gnosis* (London 1983), pp.160-161.

They have understood them as the early gnostics of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD.

Ibn-i Nadīm asserts in his *al-Fihrist* that the Dayṣānīyya, the followers of Bardesan, were scattered throughout Khurāsān and China. Bardesan was one of the gnostics before Mani, who disputed with him only in the quality of amalgamation of light and darkness. The Dayṣānīyya themselves were divided into two sects. One believed that light mixed with darkness voluntarily to refine it, but could not do it; the other sect believed that as soon as light felt the cruelty and stench of darkness, it wished to separate from it, and disputed with it involuntarily.[1]

It is obvious that the Daiṣānīyya were active in the 2nd century AD too. "A fervent disciple of Imām Ja`far Sādiq," as Corbin says, "was a family friend of the Barmecids Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam, in contact with all sorts of non-Muslim elements (Bardesanian Gnostics, Manichaeans, Nestorians and Jews). He was one of the first Shi'ite theologians and a supporter of the nascent Imamology. A good number of Shi'ite traditions refer to his authority. That someone so representative of the Shi'ite milieu could have had such connections and could even have served as an intermediary between them and the Imām should give some indication of the ways in which gnostic ideas and influences were able to penetrate both Shi'ism and Sufism."[2]

The influential paths of Gnostic thought, especially in its mystic dimension, have been spread in Iranian-Islamic culture in general, and in Iranian mysticism in particular. So, the analysis of all its cultural influences and reflections needs comprehensive research. However, we cannot deal with all aspects of Iranian Gnosticism here.[3]

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[1] Ibn-i Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, Tehran 1987, pp. 602-603.

[2] Corbin, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

[3] Since the 4th century AH / 10th AD, the Manichaean Gnostic attitude continued its life in the form of Bogomile doctrine in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, and in the

Artistic Reflection

Gnostic–Manichaean myths and doctrines have undoubtedly influenced Manichaean art. Originally, the religious-mystical representation of art is one of the significant and vast dimensions of human culture that has been reflected most aesthetically in Manichaeism, especially in the shape of the visual arts. In fact, the relationship of art and mythology has shown its transcendental shape in Manichaean gnosis. Art and myth have been knotted here in an inseparable way. Mani himself was among the artists who tended to painting, calligraphy and nibēgān-nigārīh (a special term of Manichaeans for *tadhhīb* or the art of book painting, gilding and decorating) in order to promote and preserve his religion. Manichaean art was not really intellectualistic but was at the service of the doctrine and religion.

Mani's innovation in his religious-mystical attitude was also represented in his art. It created a new artistic characteristic which is worthy of investigation. The prophet had a volume of illustrations, known as the Ārdahang (Cop. *Eikon*) that illustrated the most important motifs of his teachings. This painting book was even known as '*the Great Men-ho-i*' (*Drawing*) in China.[1]

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form of the Cathar sect in France and Italy. Bogomiles (the Lovers of God; *bogo* comes from Iranian word *baga* or bay 'god') had dualistic thoughts and promoted piety and vegetarianism, and they did not believe in Jesus' sufferings. Bogomile religion spread throughout Turkey and Asia Minor, and finally became a secret mysterious sect in Byzantine Empire in the 11th century AD. However, both the Bogomiles and the Cathars, who emphasized asceticism, piety, and vegetarianism and were also anti-church, followed a qualified dualism, in which Jesus and Satan were brothers, both children of God. Although this is not the Manichaean view, it reflects a similar dualistic way of thought. In addition, it reminds us of the Zurvānite myth in which Ohrmazd and Ahriman are in the womb of Zurwān and they are brothers.

[1] Cf. G. Haloun and W. B. Henning, "The Compendium of the Doctrines and Styles of Teaching of Mani, the Buddha of Light" in *Asia Major* (London 1952), N. S. 3, p. 209.

The most significant aesthetical aspect of Manichaean art is also the theme of the human soul's redemption and its reaching the Paradise of Light. The concept of the soul's redemption probably was illustrated in Manichaean paintings. The release of souls from the earthly world – that was regarded as a mixture of light and darkness - would be considered the most significant theme of Manichaean art. Manichaeism, like other Gnostic schools of thought, wished to flee from the material world and seek salvation beyond it.

Mani's *Ārdahang* was a painting-book or perhaps a scroll-like epistle about creation and the story of cosmogony, the world of light and darkness, and the quality of releasing light-particles, reaching the vessel of the moon and the sun, the paradise of eternal light and similar motifs. Although Mani's *Ārdahang*, possibly the most beautiful instance of Iranian pictorial art in the past centuries, vanished in the hands of the fanatics of the time, fragments of its commentary, including a Parthian fragment named Ārdahang *Wirfrās*, have survived, upon the basis of which we can describe the content and pictorial motifs to some extent.[1]

The *Ārdahang*'s paintings were most probably about the cosmogonical processes, creation, the structure of the cosmos, and the end of the world, the motifs of which were painted on several pages of a pictorial book, or in the shape of precious scrolls or pictorial textiles. These paintings were presumably divided into three parts or three scrolls, for Mani thought of three periods of creation; thus we see the content in one of Manichaean wall-paintings preserved in Turfan that has been illustrated as a tree with three trunks symbolizing three sacramental periods.

Therefore, one can presume that the *Ārdahang* contained the illustrations of Manichaean Paradise, and its multiple deities, angels and their functions. The figures such as the Father of

[1] See Chapter III.

Greatness, the Primordial Man, the Mother of Life, the Living Spirit and other celestial characters, the fighting of the demons and the Devil with the deities of light, the creation of the first human beings, and eschatology were most probably among the pictorial themes of Manichaean art.

The Iranian tradition of *pardeh-khānī* (narrating through pictorial curtains in front of the audience), which continued up to the centuries after Islam in Iran and Central Asia and also is still a living tradition in Iran continued by the traditional narrators of the Shahname of Ferdowsi, can be seen to have originated from Manichaean pictorial traditions. This is clearly described in one of the Manichaean scriptures (M 219).[1]

Each of various Manichaean arts is related to a specific geographical and cultural dominion and later spread to other regions. For instance, the art of *nibēgān-nīgārīh* or *tadhhīb* (book-painting and gilding) originates in Jewish and Gnostic artistic traditions of Mesopotamia. Mani himself learned the arts of paintings and calligraphy among these Gnostic sects. On the other hand, Manichaean silk-paintings have been influenced by Chinese and Indian arts. Frescoes and wall-paintings have chiefly survived in *mānestāns* or Manichaean monasteries in Turfan. Therefore, they are affected by the local arts of these regions.

Mani was assumed to be the inventor of a new script which was called 'Manichaean script'. It originated in Syriac-Estrangelo script with 22 alphabetical characters. Several manuscripts have been preserved in Manichaean or Sogdian scripts. The art of *tadhhīb* and book-painting can also be observed through leather, paper, or silk pieces discovered in Turfan treasuries. On these works Klimkeit writes,

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[1] Cf. M. Boyce, *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian* (Leiden-Téhéran-Liège 1975), p. 182.

> The holy books of the Manichaeans, together with their illustrations, reflect an inner attitude determined by constant reference to the World of Light. The inner spark in the human person ultimately belongs to that World of Light, and as everything there is filled with brightness, is orderly arranged, is divine and fragrant, so it is also in a pure and well-arranged soul. The beautifully written and embellished page of a handwritten and illustrated book is a mirror of such a soul."[1]

The picture of the benefactors of Shajirat al-Ḥayāt or the Tree of Life has survived in one of the wall-paintings of Manichaean monasteries, the painting of cave no. 38b, in Bäzäqlīq, the oasis of Turfan. The picture symbolizes the Realm of Light. The tree has three trunks or branches which, as mentioned above, may represent the three stages of creation or the three periods of Manichaean cosmogony.[2]

This remarkable motif was found at Bäzäqlīq, of three trunks arising from a body of water in which two water fowl swim. However, the interpreters of the painting "were hitherto of the opinion that this is a symbolic representation of the World of Light. The tree is laden with blossom and fruit, and men, angels and gods adore it. In this interpretation the three trunks could be explained by the fact that, according to the *Book of Giants*, the Kingdom of Light is spread out in three directions." [3] Here, Professor Sundermann, referring to the Chinese Compendium of the

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[1] H.-J. Klimkeit, "On the Nature of Manichaean Art" in M. Heuser and H.-J. Klimkeit, *Studies in Manichaean Literature and Art* (Wiesbaden 1988), p. 288.

[2] Cf. M. Boyce, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

[3] H.-J. Klimkeit, op. cit., p. 307; Severus of Antioch (Patriarch from 512-518 AD) says in reference to the *Book of Giants*: "The good – which they [i.e. Manichaeans] also signify as 'light' and 'tree of life' – has its regions toward the east, the west, and the north, but toward the south is Tree of Death. Of such appearance is the Tree of Life, which is decorated with all its "beauty and with its splendid ornaments" (A. Adam, *Texte zum Manichaismus*, 2nd ed. (Berlin 1969), pp. 11f.); cf. *Ibid.*

Teachings of Mani (art. 5, st. 3), proposes that "the Tree with the three trunks might be viewed as a symbol of the three functions of the Manichaean church, viz. the sacramental, teaching and serving functions. Sundermann refers to the Middle Persian terms that denote these three functions, or rather the people that are concerned with these functions, viz. *āfarīnsar, xrōhwān* and *ruwānagān-ispasag*.[1]

Also, the picture in which the Tree of Life and the Tree of Death are twisted around each other can be seen in the wall-paintings of a Manichaean monastery in the north of Sangim, cave no. 4. The Tree of Life is in blossom, beautiful and green, while the Tree of Death is withered and leafless.[2]

On the Trees of Life and Death, Klimkeit says,

> It becomes clear that the image of the two trees can be interpreted cosmologically and anthropologically. Cosmologically the trees represent the two kingdoms or principles, and anthropologically they represent the righteous and the godless. The texts tell us that the good tree bears fruits, whereas the evil tree is bare, the latter referring to those in whose lives the powers of darkness reign.[3]

However, here Sundermann has another interpretation of the separate but interlacing trees; "he sees in the two trees the duality of religion (or church) and state. This could be substantiated by the

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 308.

[2] Here Dr. Jason Beduhn, on editing the manuscript of this book, adds "This description of the trees in the Sangim temple is found in many publications, but it is inaccurate. The so-called 'Tree of Death' is actually a willow-tree, with a full set of leaves that do not reproduce well in photographs. Therefore, the interpretation may be doubtful."

[3] H.- J. Klimkeit, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

Shepherd of Hermas which depicts the church as a willow tree covering the whole earth."[1]

Manichaeans used a symbolic language to justify their specific aesthetics and to transmit the aesthetic themes. This symbolic language had two pictorial and expressive representations.

Among the fundamental and most frequent symbols of the human soul, the motif of the pearl is noticeable. The Song of Pearl which is included in the *Acts of Thomas* has been reputed to exist in many countries, but it was not really explained or quoted. The metaphor of the pearl is related both to the soul of the individual that requires redemption, and to the lighted soul of the cosmos, i.e. the Living Self that is spread throughout the world and the Manichaean redeeming characters that release it. The quest of the soul is always assimilated to a diver's actions, a diver who dives into the depths of the sea to take up precious treasures. The sea signifies the material world. In eastern Manichaeism, the image of the sea might be the Buddhist idea of Saṃsāra, which is 'the sea of birth and death'.[2]

Manichaeans used the most beautiful imagery in order to explain the concept of redemption and salvation of the soul-particles. Elements such as pearl, treasure, the Arks of the Moon and the Sun, Lotus, the Tree of Life, the Column of Glory, the Harbor of Peace etc. are among the themes of Manichaean gnosis. Treasure or pearl is the symbol of the Living Soul, i.e. the juice of light-particles spread in the world. The Ark of Light carries the light-particles. The helmsman of the Ark is the Primordial Man who is released of the powers of darkness.[3] The navigator of the Ark is the Light Nous (Pth. *mnwhmyd rwšn*) and the Ark itself represents the commandments of Manichaean church or 'Truth'. Therefore, according to *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, the believer is the

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 306.
[2] Cf. H.- J. Klimkeit, *Manichaean Art and Calligraphy* (Leiden 1982), p. 14.
[3] C. R. C. Allberry, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book* (Stuttgart 1938), pp. 207, 17-25.

treasure which is carried through the Ark to the realm of salvation; sometimes he/she can be the Ark itself which sails into the Harbor of Peace.[1]

Lotus symbolizes birth and the sun, and it is seen in most Manichaean paintings. The deities are mostly depicted standing on beds of lotus. Lotus, as a symbol, has been transmitted into Manichaean art mostly under the influence of the Buddhist art of China and Central Asia.

The Column of Glory, who is considered as one of the Manichaean deities of the Third Creation (the creation of man and his redemption), is the Milky Way through which the pure souls and released light-particles rise up to the moon, the Sun, and the Paradise of Light.

The Harbor of Peace is another Manichaean symbol which refers to the Realm of Light. The ultimate wish of a Manichaean righteous or Gnostic is: reaching the same heavenly abode, and this happens when a great fire appears at the end of the world. It burns all the wickedness and the elements of darkness, and then the world joins the Paradise of Light.

Another Manichaean artistic motif is 'the vine bearing grapes' depicted in a small cave in Sangim. It may represent the church, "as the church has its leader or its head, its archegos, thus the vineyard or the vine is cared for a gardener or tender."[2]

Therefore, the origin of Manichaean aesthetics and symbolism should be investigated in Gnosticism, mythology and art. For, the Gnostics were, in fact, Mani's predecessors who taught him a lot. Manichaeans flourished upon a bed of Gnostic and Parthian art of

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[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 13-14.

[2] Arnold-Doben, *Die Bildersprache des Manichaismus* (Cologne 1979), p. 41, quoted from H. – J. Klimkeit, "Manichaean Art on the Silk Road" in M. Heuser and H. – J. Klimkeit, *Studies in Manichaean Literature and Art* (Wiesbaden 1998), p. 309; V. Arnold-Döben adds that the 'garden of Law' signifies the home of the soul, the Realm of Light.

Mesopotamia, brought the tradition to Central Asia and the far regions of the East, and combined it with Chinese and Indian-Buddhist art.[1]

One of the representations of the combination of Manichaean and Buddhist art can be seen in the painting of the Cross of Čintāmani (the pearl of wish, salvation, and reaching Buddhist Nirvāna) at the scene of Paranirvāna (a Sanskrit term which means 'going towards Nirvāna, or ascending from the causal circle or chain') found in the Petra Cave of Ming Oi, in Turfan.

Other paintings like Akšobhya (one of five representations of Buddha created by Ādibuddha, "the first Buddha". Thunderbolt and the Cross of Light are his signs. It signifies the light and splendour of "divinity" in human beings, animals and plants) and the Cross of Light (Manichaean symbol and the mystery of light-particles spread in the world), the representation of Five Tathāgatas (gone forth toward Nirvāna)[2] in the realms of light, the painting of the Judge Scene, a Manichaean miniature with figure of the Buddha, the pictured fragment of a Sogdian book in Indian Pothi style, and the other examples, prove this combined aesthetic mood of Manichaean-Buddhist art of Central Asia and China.[3]

The Manichaean artworks have been affected also by Iranian art, as the words of Louis Hambis confirm:

> These wall-paintings, which are the only known Manichaean frescoes surviving today, display all the characteristics of Buddhist paintings of Tang dynasty in the oasis of Turfan, and

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[1] Cf. L. Hambis, "Manichaean Art" in *The Encyclopedia of Art*, vol. ix, pp. 433ff.

[2] The term *Tathāgathas* consists of two derivatives, *tathā* (thus) and *gata* (gone forth) from the root of *gam* (go, walk). So, it means 'thus gone forth', and signifies a person who paved the mid-way to reach the sea of Nirvāna. See A. Pāshāi, *Buddha* (Tehran 2003), p. 287.

[3] See H. - J. Klimkeit, "Indian Motifs in Manichaean Art" in M. Heuser and H.-J. Klimkeit, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-299.

> show undoubtedly some effects of later Sassanian art. A specific technique has been applied in the frescoes of Bäzäqlīq, but the frescoes of Qočo have been executed upon a surface that are similar to old Buddhist frescoes of this region. The influence of Chinese art has been reflected in some of its general characteristics, such as the general colourful motifs of some of the frescoes and the importance of its designs through which the lines have given a kind of splendour and fluency to the configuration..., however it seems that Chinese art was not the effective art in Manichaean wall-paintings, but the influence of Iranian Sassanian art is obvious.[1]

As an example, the influence of Sassanian artistic tradition on Manichaean art can be seen in the Sassanian relief of Tāq-e Bostān. In the relief, one can observe the pearl band which is one of the decorative characteristics of Sassanian art.[2] Examples like that reveal the influence of Sassanian art on Manichaean art of Central Asia and the oasis of Turfan. However, since the paintings of the Sassanian dynasty have mostly vanished, should we not build on the common aesthetic aspects of Manichaean and Sassanian art based on the surviving Manichaean paintings? This is, of course, only a suggestion. More discoveries of Manichaean artistic works and miniatures and a comparative survey of Sassanian and Manichaean visual arts are needed to prove their close connection.

Literary Reflection

One of the important representations of Manichaean gnosis can be seen in its literature, i.e. Manichaean religious scriptures, poetry and hymns, which constitute a kind of precious treasure. Some volumes of Mani's own writings of which some fragments survived, and the prose and poetry of his disciples and church

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[1] L. Hambis, "Manichaean Art" in *The Encyclopedia of World Art*, vol. IX, pp. 433f.

[2] Cf. *ibid*, p. 446

dignitaries from the 4th through the 9th centuries AD have created a deep and vast literature through which one can survey Manichaean gnosis and its aesthetic values.

Manichaean literature, which has survived chiefly in Syriac, Coptic, Middle Persian, Parthian and Chinese, can be divided into the two categories of prose and poetry. At this point, we should pay attention only to that part of Manichaean literature which depicts aesthetic aspects to some extent. We should undoubtedly refer to specific parables and symbolism of Manichaean writings which bear the most beautiful aspects of symbolic, poetical and gnostic expressions. The prevalent gnostic, philosophical and ritual theme of these writings is the concept of 'two principles and three periods' about which we will speak in the next chapter. Manichaeans used marvelous parables and allegories in their commentary and hermeneutics of this theme, of which the most significant examples are referred to here. One can deduce from Manichaean parables that man has a devil-like and dark origin. According to Manichaean gnosis, the material world has been created of the bodies of the defeated demons in the battles between the forces of light and darkness. It is completely mixed with the realm of darkness and the devil powers, but since this mixture of the material world is felt, redemption is possible. The only way to redemption is throwing away this temporary garment in which the Devil clothed man. And since man puts on this cloth, the 'body-addicted' soul will suffer rebirth to this world in another body. This Manichaean attitude is called *Zādmurd* (birth-death, rebirth), that is, the same metamorphosis found in Buddhist gnosis; presumably it entered Manichaean gnosis under the influence of Buddhism of Central Asia, India and China.

Therefore, there is only one way to save the human soul: the release of light imprisoned in the dark body. In one of the Manichaean Middle Persian texts we see the same motif:

Wake up of deep drunkenness in which thou art slept,
And watch me..., take me out of the bosom of Death.[1]

The Uigurian fragment T II D 78a, II, a prayer for deliverance preserved from Turfan documents, has:

Deliver me from those that do evil,
Separate me from those that are laden with guilt,
And deliver me from the sons of Hell
Who are all wicked
And who do nothing but spread wickedness.
My God, protect me from those devouring
And from manifold kinds of poisonous [snakes].[2]

Thus, life in Manichaean view means the redemption and salvation of the soul; and death means the imprisonment in the material jail. As in another Uigurian fragment (*TM 296*) we read:

Because he deigned to enlighten [us],
We were saved from the place of no return.
Because he established the Law of the Buddha (i.e. Mani),
We were freed from [distress] and misery.[3]

The investigation of the symbolic characters of Manichaean deities, especially in the three periods of the Creation Myth, which is vastly described throughout Manichaean prose and poetical writings, will reveal most of the aesthetic aspects of Manichaeism.

In a prayer of divine beings and the angels, we read:

May happiness and joy increase

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[1] *gr'n mstyft kw xwft 'šti, wygr's' 'wd 'w mn wyn'h..., 'zw'ywm 'c mrn 'gwz.* Cf. M. Boyce, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
[2] H.-J. Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* (San Francisco) 1993, pp. 295.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

> And may there come a new joy,
> Untarnished blessing, growth, increase and new victory,
> Furthermore, may the valiant and mighty angels
> And the great ones, the perfectly meritorious...divine beings, alight;
> May all the great angels grant power and help, victory and triumph.[1]

The description of two essences of light and darkness is found in Manichaean scriptures. The essence of light exists on high, in the Paradise of Light, a heaven which is unlimited on the east, the west and the north, and bordered by darkness on the south. The dark essence exists in the lower depths and borders the Paradise of Light only on the north.

The Father of Greatness is at the head of all Manichaean deities. He is absolute Beauty. In Manichaean literature, he is depicted as a wakeful shepherd and the captain of the Ark of Light. The Father has a crown of light on his head and is surrounded by heavenly light-particles.

In Manichaean scriptures, creation is described as a mythical drama: One day the Father of Greatness, that joyous and splendid Light, invoked the aeons of light and shared them in his grand joy. He invoked all the aeons of peace and all his spiritual offspring. He established the lodge of life depicting undestroyable and living pictures in it. He invoked bright clouds through which he made life fall down as rain. Then, he invoked the sacred fire, wind and air to breathe the spirit of life.[2]

The allegory of the Primordial Man's bondage in Manichaean literature is described as: He was lodged in the ship as treasure; a ship whose bottom was Dawn, upon which were the ropes of light. Its helmsmen were splendid, and its sailors put on Dawn as their

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 359.
[2] Cf. C. R. C. Allberry, A *Manichaean Psalm-Book* (Stuttgart, 1938), pp. 92f.

garments. They brought the treasure of that worthy deity, a treasure that was immeasurable. When the Devil saw the burdened ship of the Primordial Man, he gathered the plunderer and dark-hearted demons and sent them forth towards the ship. They robbed the innumerable treasure of that lightful ship, seizing the rubies and pearls and sailing them on the sky. They also put the diadems on their heads.[1]

Thus, the deity who carried the celestial light was imprisoned in the hands of demons. His captivity is a symbolic theme for later procedures of human soul redemption, the release of light and the saving of the souls captured in the material body. Is not this the Gnostic theme shared with one of the fundamental motifs of Islamic mysticism? To me, we should give high regard, above all to the Iranian great mystics, the significant gnostics such as Mani, Mar Ammo, Wahman Xwarxšēd, and some others who have created deep gnostic hymns, prayers, and poetical prose.[2]

Here we refer only to some examples of hymns and prayers which represent perfect beauty in Manichaean gnostic view:

I knew the King of Light
Who is the Tree of Life
I found Darkness
Who is the Tree of Death.
Whoever taught me wisdom
He put the wreath on your head
Whoever led me towards the sacred ones

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[1] Cf. *Ibid.*

[2] For Mani, Mar Ammo and Wahman Xwarxšēd's surviving fragments, see M. Boyce, *A Reader of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian* (Leiden-Téhéran-Liège 1975), pp. 29-53; 59-90; 163-168; see also H.-J. Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* (Wiesbaden 1993); M. Bahār and A. Esmailpour, *Adabīyyāt-e Mānavī* (*Manichaean Literature*) (Tehran 2005).

He would lead me towards the lights (stars)[1]

Leaving the material body in this world and flying towards the heavens are themes beautifully expressed in the following Manichaean hymn:

I'll pass through the heavens
And will put this body upon the earth.
They invoke me too
Blowing into the trumpets
Towards the immortals
I'll leave my body upon the earth
Of which soil I'd been originated.[2]

Manichaean hymn-cycles are preserved in Middle Persian and mainly in Parthian. Two famous Gnostic hymn-cycles are *Huyadagmān* (*Our Happy-Fortune*) and *Angad Rōšnān* (*The Perfect Lights*). There is also a collection of hymns called *Mahrnāmag* (*Hymn-Book*).[3] The theme of the soul's captivity, for instance, is described in the Hymn-Cycle *Angad Rōšnān*:

The Soul replied:
I'm the tormentless tender-born of the Father
Mixed with the material world
And I'm tormented

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[1] A. Esmailpour, *Sorūd-hāye Rowshanā'ī: Jotstāri dar She'r-e Irān-e Bāstān va Mīyāne* (*The Hymns of Light: A Research in the Old and Middle Iranian Poetry*) (Tehran 2005), p. 276.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 291.
[3] See M. Boyce, *The Manichaean Hymn-cycles in Parthian* (London 1954); W. Sundermann, *The Manichaean Hymncycles 'Huyadagmān and Angad Rōšnān' in Parthian and Sogdian* (London 1990); F. W. K. Müller, *Ein Doppelblat aus einem Manichäischen Hymnenbüch (Mahrnāmag)* (Berlin 1913); A. Esmailpour, "Mahrnāmag: A Manichaean Hymn-Book", *Prof. Mehrdād Bahār's Memorial Volume* (Tehran 1997), pp. 91-98.

Take me out of the bosom of Death.[1]

The theme of the inferior material world and the longing for ascension to the Realm of Light and Beauty is described in a Parthian hymn:

I weep for my Self
I wish I could redeem it
Of the fright of the savages
Who devour each other. [2]

Mahrnāmag, the other hymn-book of the Manichaeans who moved to Turfan, survives most probably from the 9th century AD. It was, first, composed by one of the Manichaean dignitaries, but he could not finish it; during 825-832 AD one of Manichaean *dibīrs* (scribes) called Naxūrīg Rōšn finished it. The original title of this hymn-book was *Xwaš Āwāgān* (*Sweet Voices*). It praises Mani and his ascension to heaven. It also refers to Messiah and Mar Zaku, one of the Manichaean 'teachers' (*hmmwc'g'n*). It consists of a hymn in praise of the Living Self (*gryw zyndg*) who is created of the light-particles of the Five Sons of the Primordial Man. He is the symbol of the imprisoned soul which is freed from the claws of the demons:

Remember us, O thou Soul!
Thou hast come to salute, O thou Soul!
Thou hast come to salute, O thou Soul of the Light!
Came forth this imprisoned Soul
Came forth the Saved Soul![3]

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[1] M. Boyce, *Reader*, p. 108.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 163.
[3] F. W. K. Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 24, lines 397-403; A. Esmailpour, *op. cit.*, pp. 91ff.

We see that the grief of alienation or being away from the transcendental principle or essence, which takes the main theme of Islamic mysticism, has a specific representation in Manichaean gnostic poetry. The mystical theme of

> Whoever is alienated from his essence
> Will be in search of his union,[1]

has been expressed also in Psalm 261 of the *Manichaean Psalm-Book* of which we spoke before. The theme of despising Self which is one of the current themes of our mystics, has been represented through Manichaean gnostics' tongues two or three centuries before the rise of Islam:

> This lion that is within me I have strangled
> I have turned him away from my soul
> Him who polluted me at all times.[2]

Or in Manichaean Psalm 265, we read:

> The days of thy life running from thee,
> Why dost thou vainly waste thy zeal
> On the wings of earth
> And puttest behind thee all [the things of evil]?
> Thou hast spent thy life sunk in the worries and cares of the world
> Working thyself into a decline through the pains and sorrows.
> Thou art a stranger housed in a body of earth
> Defiled, how long therefore hast thou been heedless
> Of what thou ignorantly dost?
> Blessed art thou, for the path of journey is open to you.

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[1] One of the opening verses of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's Prologue to the *Mathnawī*; cf. R. Nicholson, ed. and tr., *The Mathnawī* (Tehran 2002), p. 35.
[2] C. R.C. Allberry, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

Do not entrust your journey to oblivion.[1]

Such examples reveal that a deep relationship can be seen between the Gnostic hymns of the Manichaeans and the mystical themes of the Islamic period. The Prologue to Rūmī's *Mathnawī* is indirectly affected by Gnosticism and Christian mysticism of the first centuries AD. It shows the continuity of the Gnostic culture of the Sassanian period for centuries after Islam. The isolation and straying of the human soul and the fall of spirit from heaven down to the material world is the main theme of the Prologue in which the motif of separation is allegorically explained as the separation of *nay* (reed) from the paradaisal *nayistān* (reed bed):

Everyone who is left far from his source
Wishes back the time when he was united with it.[2]

This longing for union with the celestial source can be seen among the followers of the above two systems of Gnosticism. *Inter alia,* in one of the *Manichaean Psalms*:

I will pass up into the skies
And leave this body upon the earth
The trumpet sounds, I hear
They are calling me up to the immortals
I will cast away my body upon the earth
From which it was assembled.[3]

The antagonism between soul and body or the battle between intellect and spirit can be seen explicitly in the poetry of Rūmī:

The soul in its separation from the throne like a she-camel

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 202.
[2] Rūmī's *Mathnawī*, ed. by R. Nocholson (Tehran 2002), p. 31.
[3] C. R. C. Allberry, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book* (Stuttgart 1938), p. 261.

The body from its love of the thorn
The soul takes wings towards heaven above
The body claws at the earth
O you who have died for your country, as long as you are with me
My soul will be far from Leilī.[1]

In these couplets, Rūmī has assimilated the tug of war between soul and body or the battle between form and meaning or the antagonism between intellect and spirit to the antagonism of Majnūn with the she-camel.[2] The squabble between soul and body and between intellect and spirit or the dispute between love and intellect, and form and meaning conjures up the duality of Gnostics who believe in the eternal and everlasting separation of the world of light and darkness or of spirit and matter. Of course, this analogy does not suggest that the mystics accepted the fundamentals of Gnostic-Manichaean thought, but it conjures up a kind of dialectical attitude, which is observed in most cultures, *inter alia*, in Iranian mystical and literary works.[3]

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[1] Rūmī, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-67.

[2] See J. Sattārī, *Hālāt-e 'Eshq-e Majnūn* (*The Aspects of Majnūn's Love*) (Tehran 1987), p. 283.

[3] For more observation, see Chapter VI.

Conclusion

An indication of the continuity of the Manichaean gnostic themes can be seen in some Iranian cultural and literary aspects as discussed above. The influence of Manichaean-gnostic approach in Iran is undeniable. However, as we have seen, the influence was indirect especially during the Sassanian and Islamic era, because the Manichaean idea of dualism was strictly regarded as a dangerous heresy both in early Christianity and the first centuries after Islam. Therefore, Manichaean gnostics tried to hide their beliefs in Christian and Islamic coverings during later periods. In this way, we observe their deep impact on Iranian cultural, mystical and literary dimensions up to the centuries after Islam. Although the idea of the permeation of Gnostic themes into Islamic mysticism, especially the manner in which these themes permeated through the Christian and Manichaean ascetics, is a new trend in mystical and literary researches, the continuation of deep, sustained and steady research might bring about a profound change in the study of mystical texts.

II

Manichaean Creation Myth

Manichaean Pantheon

Gods and Goddesses of the Creation Myth and Their Functions

There are more than twenty gods and goddesses with different names and functions so far known through the original Manichaean sources. The variation of the divinities' names is due to different Manichaean manuscripts in an assortment of languages. Each language has its own way of nomenclature that causes confusion and amazement among most readers. So it is worthwhile to choose a specific name for each deity. For this, we prefer those names - with a little turning- mentioned in Mary Boyce's *Reader*. For the other names of gods and goddesses used in Syrian, Coptic, Greek, Latin, Sogdian, Arabic and Persian, see *Adabīyyāt-e Mānavī (Manichaean Literature)*, edited by M. Bahār and the author.

The Golden Era
(The period of the separation of Light and Darkness before Creation)

The Father of Greatness (*Pid i Wuzurgīh, Zurwān*): The supreme god, father of all the cosmos, and the King of the Paradise of Light.

The Great Spirit (*Wāxš Yoždahr*): Heavenly spouse of the Father of Greatness.

The First Creation
(The period of the Demons' invasion of the border of the Light Realm, their battles with the deities of Light, and the imprisonment of the Primordial Man)

The Mother of Life (*Mādar i Zīndagān*): the Mother of the cosmos and the bearer of the Primordial Man.

The Primordial Man (*Ohrmizdbag*): the Son of the Mother of Life and the symbol of man's bondage in the material world.

The Five Elements (*Amahraspandān*): the Primordial Man's children who are Ether (*Frāwahr*), Wind (*Wād*), Light (*Rōšn*), Water (*Āb*), and Fire (*Ādur*).

The Living Self (*Grīw Zīndag*): a deity shaped from the Five Elements, the light imprisoned in Matter.

The Second Creation
(The Redemption process of the Primordial Man and the Creation of the material world)

The Beloved of the Lights (*Rōšnan Xwārist*): a deity who is the illuminator of the battlefields in the redeeming process of the Primordial Man by the Living Spirit and his Five Sons.

The Great Architect (*Bām Yazd*): the architect and builder of the New Paradise, a temporary paradise to keep the released light-particles until the end of the world.

The Living Spirit (*Mihr Yazd*): the redeemer of the Primordial Man and the creator of the material world.

Five Sons (*Panj Puhrān*): the Sons of the Living Spirit who are:

The Keeper of Splendour (*Dahibed*): the King of the first firmament and the keeper of the three upper firmaments.

The King of Honour (*Pāhragbed*): the king of the seven lower firmaments.

The Adamas of Light (*Wisbed*): a deity standing in the middle of the cosmos and its keeper.

The King of Glory (*Wādahrāmyazd*): the revolver of the three Wheels of Wind, Water and Fire.

Atlas (*Mānbed*): a deity standing on the fifth earth, who holds all the eight earths on his shoulders and feet.

The Call-God (*Xrōštagyazd*): the sixth son of the Living Spirit, a deity who calls the imprisoned Primordial Man.

The Answer-God (*Padwāxtag Yazd*): the sixth son of the Primordial Man, a deity who answers to the Call-God.

The Third Creation
(The period of Man's Creation and his redemption)

The Third Messenger (*Narisah Yazd*): the redeemer and messenger god in the process of releasing the light-particles.

Jesus the Splendour (*Yišō' Zīwā(h)*: the divine messenger and man's spiritual guide.

The Maiden of Light (*Kanīg Rōšn*): the redeemer of some imprisoned light-particles.

The Column of Glory (*Bāmistūn*): the Light-Column or the Milky Way through which the released pure souls and light-particles pass and ascend to the Moon, the Sun, and the New Paradise.

The Best Chariot-Pulling God (*Rahangweh Yazd*): a deity in the chariots of the Moon and the Sun, who is the gatherer and keeper of all the saved light-particles.[1]

The Great Nous (*Wahman Wuzurg*): the redeemer god and man's spiritual guide who has five Limbs: Reason (*Bām*), Mind (*Manohmed*), Intelligence (*Uš*), Thought (*Andešišn*), and Understanding (*Parmānag*).

The Just Judge (**Dādwar i Dādgar*): a god who judges human's souls after death.

The Last God (*Istomēn Yazd*): the last deity of the Manichaean pantheon, who is born – after the Great Fire at the end of the world – of the last released light-particles.

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[1] Cf. H. Reza'ī Bāghbīdī, "On the Unknown Epithet of a Manichaean God" in *Central Asiatic Journal*, 46 (2002) n. 1, pp. 1ff; although the author of the paper regards it as an epithet for the Column of Glory, in my opinion, it is an epithet for another distinctive deity who is traveling in the chariots of the Moon and the Sun. See also the following pages: "The Fate of the Soul after Death", note on *Rahangweh Yazd*.

Abolqasem Esmailpour, Manichaean Gnosis & Creation Myth
Sino-Platonic Papers, 156 (July, 2005)

The Reconstruction and Narration of Manichaean Creation Myth

At the beginning, there were two Essences: the Essence of Light and the Essence of Darkness. The first existed on high, in the Paradise of Light which was unlimited on the east, the west and the north, bordered by the Realm of Darkness on the south. The Essence of Darkness existed in the lower depth which was also unlimited on the east, the west and the south, bordered by the Paradise of Light on the north. The king of the Paradise of Light was the Father of Greatness or Zurwān, and the ruler of the Realm of Darkness was called the Devil or Ahreman.

The Paradise of Light [1]

The Paradise of Light consists of 'Five Greatnesses'[2]: the Father of Greatness, Twelve Aeons[3], the Aeon of Aeons, Pure Air, and the Realm of Light.

First, the Father of Greatness is a splendid king and the god of all gods and the father of all our races.[1] The sun exists in his aeons or

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[1] Among more than a hundred texts on Manichaean creation myth which were chosen to reconstruct the myth, there is only one Sogdian text, which most fantastically describes the Paradise of Light and its ruler, the Father of Greatness. See Sogdian texts, no. 54. The number of the texts are according to the texts given in my *Ostūre-ye Āfarīnesh dar Ā'īn-e Mānī (The Myth of Creation in Manichaeism)* (Tehran 2004). The reader can also find the original texts or their foreign translations according to the Table of the Texts at the end of the book. Cf. also W. B. Henning, "A Sogdian Fragment of Manichaean Cosmogony" in *Selected Papers, Acta Iranica* 15 (Leiden-Téhéran-Liège 1977), pp. 301-313.

[2] 'Five Greatnesses' is called 'Five Lodges' in Syriac text no. 95, 'Five Trees' in Coptic text no. 64, and 'Five Thoughts' in Parthian text no. 12.

[3] Aeons are the eternal beings, light-particles and divine forces of the Paradise of Light, who, as the twelve zodiac signs, obey the King of Paradise of Light and stand in front of His majesty. Here the sacred number 12 in Babylonian beliefs is notable.

spiritual particles.[2] He is as a good and fertile tree that has never born evil fruits; he is the absolute light and eternal beauty; a guard who watches his tower; a sleepless shepherd; a conscious helmsman whose ship never drowns and ultimately reaches the shore of light and immortality; he is the bearer of an undestroyable crown; his throne never falls and he has twelve strong walls.[3]

Second, the Twelve Aeons are in front of the Father of Greatness watching him. The aeons are white and eternal and do not know death. Sometimes they stand obeying like twelve eternal walls, sometimes as twelve stars in front of His sun, watching Him.[4]

Third, the Blessed Places (=Aeons) untouchable and numberless wherein dwell the Light Gods, the Angels, the Elements, and the powers in great bliss and joy, and they have immortal life.

Fourth, the Pure Air is in the Light Paradise, marvelous and beautiful to behold, with immeasurable goodness. It shall bring into being the gods' marvelous dresses and garments, thrones,

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[1] In Iranian Manichaean texts, the Father of Greatness is called Zurwān. Although this god of Time has bisexual character in Zoroastrian and Zurvanite literature – because he is both the father and the mother of Ahura Mazda and Ahriman – he is an untouchable God-father in Manichaean texts. He is too transcendental to interfere directly in the material creation. The Living Spirit creates the material world with the help of the Mother of Life. There is Holy Spirit beside the Father of Greatness. One can imagine her as His metaphysical spouse who has not any role in the creation process. See M. Boyce, *Reader* (Leiden 1975), p. 4.

[2] Here Dr. Jason Beduhn in his notes on the manuscript of the book remarks that "this is the second time you have identified the sun with the Father of Greatness. But to my knowledge the sun is associated with the Third Messenger". However, my description here is based only on the Sogdian fragment referred as text no. 54.

[3] See Coptic text no. 60.

[4] Unfortunately the first part of the description of the Manichaean Paradise of Light in Sogdian fragment 54, which is about the Father of Greatness, has been corrupted.

diadems, and fragrant wreathes, ornaments, and finery of all kinds by its supernatural power.

Fifth, the Realm of Light is self-existent, eternal, miraculous; in height it is beyond reach, its depth can not be perceived. No enemy and no injurer walk in this realm; its divine pavement is of the substance of diamond that never shakes. All good things emerge from it: adorned, graceful hills wholly covered with flowers, grown in much excellence; green fruit-bearing trees whose fruits never drop, never rot, and never become wormed; springs flowing with ambrosia that fill the whole Paradise, its groves and plains; countless mansions and palaces, thrones and benches that exist in perpetuity for ever and ever.

Thus arranged is the Paradise, in these Five Greatnesses. They are calm in quietude and do not know fear. They live in the light, where they have no darkness; in eternal life, where they feel no death; in health without sickness; in joy, where they have no sorrow; in charity without hatred; in the company of friends, where they have no separation; in a shape that is not brought to naught, in a divine body where there is no destruction; on ambrosial food without restriction, wherefore they bear no toil and hardship. In appearance they are ornate, in strength powerful, in wealth exceeding rich; they know not even the name of poverty. Nay, they are equipped, beautiful, and embellished; no damage occurs in their bodies. Their garments of joy are finery that never get soiled, of seventy myriad kinds, set with jewels. Their places are never destroyed.[1]

There are five kinds of trees in the Paradise of Light. These trees are eternally green and bearable during summers and winters.[2] The Great Spirit blows into them and feeds them with her light.[3]

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[1] Sogdian text no. 54.
[2] Coptic text no. 64.
[3] Coptic text no. 58.

The Paradise of light shines with five pure thoughts at every coast, and has a refreshing wind; gods, divinities, essences, trees, springs and plants are happy through it.[1] It is a realm where no one can find wrath, greed, lust, deception, destruction, chaos, theft, sin, hunger and thirst, coldness and warmth, affliction and sorrow, sickness and pain, old age, death and ugliness.[2]

The paradise of Light has five spiritual limbs of breeze, wind, light, water and fire.[3] It has fantastic white outlooks; there are gates, towers, houses, gardens, trees, branches full of fruits and sprouts in them, sparkling in different colours.[4]

The King of Light Paradise, the Father of Greatness, is a great luminous commander who has five limbs: meekness, knowledge, wisdom, absence and cleverness. In addition, he has five other limbs consisting of kindness, faith, loyalty, generosity, and science.[5] He is a noble tree bearing no bad fruits. He is a father with innumerable offspring, a guard who watches his tower, a sleepless shepherd, and an alert helmsman. And his palace has twelve vigorous walls.[6]

One day the Father of Greatness, the splendid and happy light, invoked the aeons of light and shared with them his grand joy. He invoked the aeons of peace and all his spiritual offspring; he established the place of life and depicted living and eternal pictures in it. He invoked the bright clouds, descended the Life as rain through them. Then, he invoked the holy fire, wind and air that blew the spirit of life.[7]

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[1] Parthian text no. 12.
[2] Parthian text no. 41.
[3] If we consider the word to be 'breeze' instead of 'ether, frawahr' these five forces are the same as the Five Sons (Amahraspandān) of the Primordial Man.
[4] Arabic text no. 88.
[5] Arabic texts nos. 88 and 86; in Syriac text no. 94; these five limbs are 'wisdom, knowledge, mind, concept and thought.'
[6] Coptic text no. 60.
[7] Coptic text no. 65.

The Great Spirit, the spiritual and ritual spouse of the Father of Greatness, is always beside him. She eternally reveals the path of truth to us and teaches us that there are two essences: the essence of light and the essence of darkness. They were primordially diverged from each other. The divergence continues until the Devil's attack, and the mingled period lasts up to the end of the material world.

The Realm of Darkness

The Realm of Darkness is deep and unlimited from every side, except on the north, which is bordered by the Realm of Light. The essence of the Realm of Darkness has five limbs: Mist (or Cloud), Fire, Simom (warm and poisonous wind), Poison and Darkness.[1] The ruler of this realm is the Devil or the King of Darkness.[2] He is not eternal in nature, but he bears within him eternal essences. His head is as a lion's, his body as a dragon's, wings as a bird's, and his tail as a fish's. He has four legs as quadrupeds. As soon as the Devil began life, he was poised to swallow and destroy every thing.[3]

The essence of darkness is ugly, deficient, wicked, turbid and putrid, bearing a Self that is evil, low, stupid, offensive and foolish, and his action is mingled with wickedness, corruption, damage and deficiency; his features are wickedness, dying and impure excrement.[4]

There exist fiery bodies and poisonous offspring in the Realm of Darkness. The Devil gathers many commanders and is ready to

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[1] Arabic text no. 86.

[2] In Parthian texts, the Devil is called 'the Prince of Darkness' (text no. 12), in Middle Persian texts 'the King of Demons' (text no. 17), in Arabic texts 'Satan' and in Persian texts 'Ahriman'.

[3] Arabic text no. 86.

[4] Arabic text no. 90.

fight.[1] This realm is equipped with five caves, each deeper than the other; Greed (MP. *Āz Dēw*), the mother of demons and the Devil's spouse, lives there. She is the generator of all evils.[2] The Devil begins combat from these five caves, with five springs polluted with poison, and with five tastes that are salty, sour, hot, rough and bitter.[3]

As the King of Darkness came into being in darkness, he first moved from right to left, corrupting everything. Then he decided to ascend, but when he saw the sparkling of light, he worried and, since he saw that the more he ascended, the more he trembled, so he was drowned in his thoughts and finally he returned to his elements. Afterwards, he decided to ascend once more. The Realm of Light, however, realized the Devil's wicked purpose for slaughter and corruption. This consciousness led to the consciousness of the clever world, then to the consciousness of the world of absence, wisdom and generosity.[4]

Then the King of Darkness went to the border of Light and saw Five Greatnesses or light-beings of Light Paradise. So, he said to him; "Would I be like them?" But he was born of darkness, an unfortunate being that has nothing, no wealth in his treasury and no eternity in his destiny. He watched the light-particles one moment so that if something descended, he would seize it, put on the light garment, and become like him.[5]

Manichaean creation myth is ultimately the story of the Two Principles and the Three Periods. The Two Principles are the essences of light and darkness. Each of them has a unique origin. The Three Periods are: 1) *Primordial Period*, the golden era of

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[1] Latin text no. 98.
[2] We know only from a Parthian text (no. 41) that the Greed Demon is the spouse of the Devil, and the demons are her offspring.
[3] Syriac text no. 95.
[4] Arabic text no. 86.
[5] Coptic text no. 65.

separation and division of light and darkness in which the sky and the earth have not been created yet. 2) *Mingled Period,* when darkness attacks at the Realm of Light and creates misery. Man is created during this era and lives at this burning place, but he promises to flee from it. 3) *Final Period*, when there will be a grand metamorphosis. Righteousness and Evil will return each to its origin. The golden era of separation will begin again. Darkness will be imprisoned at the depth of a pit and the lights will be united for ever.[1]

The Devil's Invasion of the Realm of Light

When the Devil saw the Realm of Light, he wished to possess it. The idea of invasion occupied his mind. He decided to ascend with the help of the Sons of Darkness.

When the Father of Greatness saw this, he invoked the spiritual forces of light and said: "Gather here all of you! And guard yourselves against the Devil's eyes, who has looked up now!"

One of the Sons of Light looked from the sky and as soon as he saw the Devil, he told his light-brothers: "O, my brothers! O, Sons of Light that there is no deficiency and diminution within you; I looked into the pit and saw those evil eyes belonging to that son of evil and darkness who is about to fight. I saw his seven companions and twelve viziers. I saw his established camp with fire burning in its center. I saw those indigent poor ones who were thinking of war; I saw their bloody weapons ready to fight; I saw their traps and nets spread so that when the destined bird comes forth, be it trapped. I saw those sons of corruption and darkness drinking stolen wine, and eating stolen meat."[2]

The Five Greatnesses worried. Then, the Father of Greatness reacted and said: "I never send out to battle one of these forces of Light Paradise which are my spiritual and eternal particles, because

[1] Coptic text no. 58; Chinese text no. 80.
[2] *Ibid.*

I created them for peace and rest. I myself have to take action." So, he invoked the Mother of Life. She invoked her brave son, the Primordial Man. He, in his turn, invoked his Five Sons and was ready to fight.[1]

The First Creation

The grand goddess of the First Creation is the Mother of Life who stands with her hands on her breasts, in front of the Father of Greatness and is his servant. She is the afflicted mother of the Primordial Man, the mother of all the righteous ones and all the living; and she is the first weapon of the Lord, the Father of Greatness.[2]

After the Devil's invasion, the Primordial Man rushed into the Realm of Darkness. First, he put on the garment of 'body' and attacked against the Devil and the demons together with his Five Sons who are Ether, Wind, Light, Water, and Fire. He put into jail many of the demons, but finally, the aeons of wind surrounded him, like a wild army in the territory of the wind. The Primordial Man tried sharply to release himself and his sons, but the demons swallowed the light-particles of his Sons, and he himself was imprisoned at the bottom of the pit.[3]

Then, the demons fastened him. He was shining among the demons of darkness with a handsome body, like a bright star in the

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[1] Syriac text no. 95; in Greek text no. 102, it is stated that there was not any evil in the Father of Greatness nor could he punish the Devil through it. So, he sent out his force called 'Spirit' to fight with the Devil. This process caused the mingling of soul and matter.

[2] Middle Persian text no. 3; Parthian texts nos. 35 and 36; Coptic text no. 57. According to a Middle Persian text (no. 2, st. 1), the Mother of Life, in spite of bearing the Primordial Man, supervises all battle scenes and enrolls as a guide and helper. She proceeds up to the border of the Realm of Darkness (cf. text no. 36) and later tries to release her son.

[3] Parthian texts nos. 1 and 14.

middle of darkness, like a human being among the wild beasts and like a deity among the devils.[1]

At this time, the Living Self, who was originated from the essences of the Five Elements or Five Lights (the Primordial Man's children), helped his father, but he was finally swallowed by the demons too.[2] While the Devil was quarrelling with the Primordial Man, the Five Lights were mingled with Five Elements of Darkness: Smoke with Fire, Light with Darkness, Simoom with Wind, Cloud with Water, and Ether with Poison.[3]

According to other narratives, the Primordial Man was as though in a ship like a rich treasure;[4] a ship whose bottom is 'Dawn', with lightful ropes hanging on it. Its helmsmen were splendid and its captains put on the 'Dawn' as their garments. They brought the treasure of the noble god, an unbound treasury.

When the Devil saw the rich ship of the Primordial Man, he gathered the robber dark-hearted demons, and sent them towards the ship. They stole the innumerable treasures of the lightful ship, seized the hyacinths and jewels.[5]

The Primordial Man thus was imprisoned by the demons and fell unconscious in the dark pit. After a while, he was conscious and supplicated his mother for help. Then, the Mother of Life appealed to the Father of Greatness in order to send a redeemer for her son.[6] When the Father of Greatness knew the incident and heard that the Primordial Man's ship had run into the storm and his helmsmen were injured and captured, he summoned a messenger and ordered

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[1] Middle Persian text no. 18.
[2] Arabic text no. 86.
[3] Parthian text no. 35.
[4] The parable of the ship refers, in fact, to the bondage of the human soul in his material body. This is presumably a Christian parable because it was taken from *Thomas' Psalms*, Psalm no. 3; cf. C.R.C. Allberry, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book* (Stuttgart 1938), pp. 207-209.
[5] Coptic text no. 66.
[6] Parthian text no. 1.

him: "Go there, where the wind carried away the ship. Pull it and bring it here! Guide the helmsmen and bring forth those who were the trustee of the treasure. Dig out the Devil's territory with spade, destroy and upset it. Cast down the firmaments with hyacinths and pearls. Gather all the treasures of that god, put them on the ship. Disgrace them, those worthless ones, and cast their diadems down!"[1]

The Primordial Man's imprisonment was a trap to defeat all evil forces. For the Father of Greatness like a shepherd seeing a lion coming to annihilate his flock, used a lamb as a snare and left it in the battlefield to catch the lion finally. He tried to save all the sheep of his herd by luring it with a lamb and then cure the injured innocent animal.

Such was the Father's way, who sent forth his brave offspring. He, the Primordial Man, together with his Five Elements, attacked the five pits of Darkness. He fell upon them as rain, sank into them as a sparkle, crept into their inner limbs and imprisoned most of the demons, but he himself fell at the bottom of the pit and cried out: "The fetid and malignant demons have rebelled and used their spears against me." Meanwhile, the Father of Greatness invoked: "Greeting and peace be upon thee, O the offspring of Light! Greeting and praise be upon thee, O youth! We will release thee of the demons' claws!"[2]

The Second Creation

The Father of Greatness invoked the Beloved of the Lights or the first deity of the second Creation.[3] The deity tries to release the

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[1] Coptic text no. 66.

[2] Coptic text no. 67.

[3] Syriac tex t no. 96; according to another Syriac text (no. 95), an angel called Naḥashbaṭ visits the Primordial Man with the diadem of victory in his hand, and shines forward. The Beloved of the Lights, whose specific character was stated obscure and uncertain by Mary Boyce (*op. cit.*, p.5) is, in my opinion, a deity who descends following the Primordial Man to the Realm of Darkness and

Primordial Man too and imprisoned a number of the dark forces.[1] Then, the Beloved of the Lights invoked, or gave birth to, the Great Architect. The latter also invoked the Living Spirit who, in turn, invoked his Five Sons. He created the Keeper of Splendour from his reason, the King of Honour from his mind, the Adamas of Light from his intelligence, the King of Glory from his thought, and Atlas from his understanding. These divinities descended down to the Realm of Darkness and found that the Primordial Man and his children had been swallowed by the Devil and the demons.

Therefore, the Living Spirit cried out loudly, called the Primordial Man and told him: "Salutations, O Pious One among the evils! O light-created in the idle of the darkness! O God who has dwelt among the savage beasts! Now the time of your redemption has come forth!"[2]

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seizes some captives from the forces of Darkness (cf. Arabic text no. 86; Syriac text no. 96). One of the functions of the Beloved of the Lights is possibly to assist the Living Spirit through enlightening the scene of the battle. For, according to a Syriac text (no. 95), the angel Naḥashbaṭ has also such a duty and takes a lamp in front of the Primordial Man and illuminates the battle scene in the Realm of Darkness.

[1] Arabic text no. 86.

[2] Syriac text no. 96; in Coptic text no. 58, the redeemer of the Primordial Man is a Maiden equipped with five forces who fights with five pits of darkness. This deity certainly cannot be the Maiden of the Light, for she appears in the Third Creation. She may be the Mother of Life. (Here Dr. Jason Beduhn writes in his editing of the manuscript of this book: " The Chinese texts have the Mother of Life working with the Living Spirit to liberate the Primordial Man. This is probably the same tradition you point to in the Coptic text. But also the child of the Primal Man, Fire, descends as a maiden, who is formed into weapons that attack the Devil, etc., in the Coptic material.") In another Coptic text, no. 67, we read that the Adamas of Light released that 'youth' who is imprisoned in the pit of darkness. In Arabic text no. 86, the redeemer is Ḥabīb al-Anwār or the Maiden of the Lights. Therefore, since most of the Manichaean texts are translated from the texts which themselves are translated from other languages, and also because of the multitude of the divinities, the narrators and interpreters

This call manifested as a deity named the Call-God.[1] He descended too, split the demons' army, greeted the Primordial Man and told him: "Gather your limbs to ascend up to the Paradise of Light!"

The Primordial Man rejoiced at hearing this joyful good news and answered him. From this response, the Answer-God was created.[2] Then, the Primordial Man proclaimed through this deity: "Thou has brought forth salvation and peace for us and for the sons of light. Let us know what has happened to them." The Call-God answered: "They are rejoicing and conferring benevolence." Then, the Call-God and the Answer-God went forth together towards the Mother of Life and the Living Spirit.

The Living Spirit came to the border of the light with darkness. He appeared with Grand Light and came near with his force and his Father's strength in order to fight with the demons and their camps. He threw his right hand down to the border of darkness, pulled up the Primordial Man and brought him to the Paradise of Light.[3] Then, he came down, caught the Devil, cast down his diadem from his head, put the dictators of the Realm of Darkness into jail, took their kingdom and leadership, punished them and cast them down to fiery pits, closed the springs of fire so that they could not send up smoke. He extinguished the sparks of fire, brought up the light and stood it at its right place. He, with the aid of his sons, seized both the masculine and feminine demons, put them into jail, obstructed the troublesome rivers, cleaned the

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of Manichaean creation myth were occasionally confused. So differences in the content of the texts seem natural.

[1] The deity is called Xwandag in Middle Persian texts. He descends hurriedly and fashions five 'Good Omens', one of which is 'Health'. Cf. text no. 30.

[2] Parthian text no. 1.

[3] His nickname in Coptic texts is 'the Spirit of Endurance' and 'our First Right Hand' (Coptic texts nos. 55 and 61), and he is called 'the King of Seven Realms' in Sogdian texts (no. 55, st. 2).

waters and sent up fresh water. He uprooted the darkness, cast it down and finally, established the light in its real abode.

The Living Spirit took the Primordial Man's ship, which had run into the storm, to the coast of salvation. He subdued its inner rebellions, assigned some watchmen to it, venerated its helmsmen, and destroyed and cast down the demons' false heaven on which the stolen hyacinths and pearls were fixed. He disgraced them, cast their diadems down, strengthened the ship and fixed breakwater on it and pulled it up as a gift for the Father of Greatness.[1]

The Living Spirit returned again and said: "Three vehement strokes have beaten the enemy and there were three combats." In the first combat, the Devil attacked the Realm of Light, but the Living Spirit defeated and enchained him. In the second combat, the Devil was torn and burnt at the Grand Fire.[2] In the third combat, all things were devastated and the masculine demons were separated from the feminine ones.[3]

At last, the Living Spirit ascended from the Realm of Darkness and rested beside the Mother of Life and the Primordial Man at the Paradise of Light.

The Creation of Cosmos

Then, the Living Spirit, the god of the Seven Climes along with the Mother of Life began to design the cosmos. After a long counsel, they began to fashion the world. First, they made the 'Five Rugs'[4]and there they seated the splendid deity. The 'Five Rugs' served as a wall between the Paradise of Light and the mingled

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[1] Coptic texts nos. 66 and 67.

[2] The burning of the Devil is based on the Coptic narrations. According to Iranian traditions, the Devil is imprisoned in the pit of depths the mouth of which is covered with a huge rock.

[3] Coptic text no. 79.

[4] The 'Five Rugs' stands between the Paradise and the 'Mingled World'. See Sogdian text no. 17.

cosmos. Below it, they fashioned ten firmaments from the skins of the killed demons. They fixed a magic twelve-faced Lens there, and a divinity watched over it so that the remaining demons could cause no hurt.[1] Then, they created forty angels in order to keep up those ten firmaments with twelve gates on each firmament. So, they built the other four gates on four sides. The thickness of those ten firmaments and of the air was ten myriad parasangs. To each of twelve gates that exist in each of the firmaments they constructed six thresholds, to each threshold thirty Bazaars, in each Bazaar twelve Rows, in each Row two sides; to the one side they made one hundred and eighty stalls, to the other side another one hundred and eighty. In every stall they fettered and enclosed the demons, the males separately from the females.[2]

Afterwards, they assigned the Keeper of Splendour as the ruler of three upper firmaments, and the King of Honour as the ruler of the other seven firmaments. They crowned them.[3] The King of Splendour stood on the first firmament holding the head of the Five Elements or five children of the Primordial Man.[4] The King of Honour will judge the demons and the other creatures of Darkness and will watch over the root of the Light. In his watch-post, there will be an earthquake and evilness and demons named Egrigroi will rise.[5]

Under the Ten Firmaments[6], however, they created a Rolling Wheel[1] and Zodiac. They fastened the most iniquitous, vicious and

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[1] According to Coptic texts (*Kephalaia* 36, 87), a wheel like a twelve-sided lens stands in front of the King of Honour. All the things that are visible to him in the sky stand on a bed in the seventh firmament; this is his miracle mirror.

[2] Sogdian text no. 55.

[3] Coptic text no. 57.

[4] Middle Persian text no. 2, st. 7.

[5] Coptic text no. 70.

[6] According to a Syriac tradition, eleven firmaments. The Last, which is the eleventh, is the same sky we see on which the stars are fixed; cf. Syriac text no. 96.

rebellious demons of Darkness on the Zodiac. They imprisoned the twelve constellations and the Seven Planets and handed them to the lowest firmament along with Two Dragons.[2] They assigned two angels – a male and a female – to revolve them uninterruptedly. They made two bright chariots from the wind, the light, the water and the fire refined of mixture: the Sun's Chariot was built from fire and light, with five walls of ether, wind, light, water and fire; and twelve gates, five houses, three thrones and five 'soul-gatherer' angels who are in the watery wall.[3]

Then, the Living Spirit clothed himself with Three Garments[4] from those refined light-particles which were: the garments of wind, water, and fire. And he set bright stars on different regions of the lower firmament.

At this time, the Great Architect filled and surfaced the five pits of death in order to create the New Paradise.[5] He fashioned a wall

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[1] Something that is similar to the twelve-sided lens.

[2] In fact, two sides of 'Jowzahr' or two cross points of the cycles of the Moon and the Sun that causes eclipses. The Seven Planets are the demons or archons.

[3] The Sun and the Moon are made of the four essences of wind, light, water and fire; and the fifth essence or 'ether' is used to fashion the celestial walls. The Sun and the Moon are the passages of the redeemed light-particles towards the New Paradise. Cf. Greek text no. 103; according to the same text, while the Living Spirit appears, the force is separated from the material, then the Sun and the Moon are fashioned from them. The stars and all the firmaments originate from those particles that are mingled with evil. One can see the influence of western Mithraism in this Greek text. See J. Puhvel, "Mithra as an Indo-European Divinity" in *Études Mithriaques, Acta Iranica* 17 (Leiden-Téhéran-Liège 1978), pp. 335-344; also cf. M. Vermaseren, *Mithra, Ce Dieu Mysterieux* (Bruxelles 1966).

[4] These are spiritual garments, that is, the Living Spirit equipped with these elements. Cf. Middle Persian text no. 2.

[5] It is a temporary Paradise in the Mingling Period of light and darkness that will join the Paradise of Light at the end of the world.

to defend the Paradise of Light from the east, the west, and the south.[1]

The Living Spirit fashioned eight earths from the bodies of the killed demons.[2] Atlas stood on the fifth earth holding the three upper earths on his shoulders. The other four earths were built on the lower parts.

On the fifth earth, there stood a wall from the east to the south and the west. It had three climes, three columns and five domes. Three columns have been fixed respectively in the east, the west and the south. Five domes have been fashioned respectively; the first from the western wall and column, the second from the western column towards the southern column, the third from the southern column to the eastern column, the fourth from the eastern column to the eastern wall, and the fifth grand dome from the eastern column towards the western column. And another great and solid earth was made with twelve gates, which were in front of the firmaments and around the same earth, there stood four walls and three ditches, the innermost in which the demons were fettered.[3]

The Adamas of Light stands in the middle of the world. The King of Glory is a sacred advisor who revolves three Wheels of Wind, Water and Fire. Atlas is the armour of the Primordial Man, who has the heavy weight of the fifth earth on his shoulder and

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[1] Middle Persian text no. 2.

[2] According to Parthian text no. 37, the Living Spirit fashions the earths and firmaments from the mixture of the Five Lights and five demonic caravans. The motive of the Creator to create the cosmos that is a mixture of light and darkness, was to make a prison for the Devil and the demons in order that there would be an opportunity for the swallowed souls or light-particles to be refined (cf. Coptic text no. 58); the eighth earth is our earth on which human beings, animals and plants exist.

[3] Middle Persian text no. 2.

keeps the earths steady with feet and hands. He has three splendid pillars and five holy domes.[1]

After a while the seas, the mountains, the valleys, the springs and the rivers were created on each earth each of which had many realms, countries, tribes, villages and houses. Each country was ruled by a Dahibed (the ruler of the country), each tribe by a Zandbed (the ruler of the tribe), each village by a Wisbed (the leader of the village), and each house by a Mānbed (the leader of a house). Then, Āstānag (month), Rāstwān (twenty-four hours) and Wizihrag (two hours) were created. But the world was still unmovable and timeless.

The Living Spirit and the Mother of Life commanded the Call-God (Mizdagtāz) and the Message-God (Azdegaryazd) to stand in front of the Keeper of Splendour – the king of the first firmament – and obey him.[2]

The Living Spirit and the Mother of Life rose up to the Paradise of Light after creating the cosmos. They were accompanied by the Primordial Man, the Beloved of the Lights and the Great Architect and stood before the King of the Paradise of Light with their hands on their chests; they bowed, praised and said: "We praise thee, O our Father who created us through thy miracle and holy word; and imprisoned the Greed Demon, the Devil, the demons and she-demons by us. So command a deity to go forth and watch the prison of the demons, to motivate and to bestow time to the Sun and to the Moon; to redeem and save the light and splendour of the gods which were harmed by the Greed Demon, the Devil, the demons and she-demons; and to instruct the wind, water and fire to pass forth to the paradise!"

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[1] Coptic texts nos. 57 and 60; according to the Parthian text no. 37, a sphere is also made in addition to ten firmaments and eight earths, and the Syriac text no. 6 tells us that Atlas holds the eight earths on his knees.

[2] Middle Persian text no. 2, st. 7.

The Third Creation

The King of the paradise of Light created three gods through his miracle and holy word: the Third Messenger[1], Jesus the Splendour and the Maiden of Light. The Third Messenger rules over the earth and the sky, keeps the cosmic light, and clears out the days and nights.[2] He invoked the Twelve Maidens whose garments are decorated with signs and diadems: First, strength; second, wisdom; third, victory; fourth, the mind force; fifth, purity; sixth, righteousness; seventh, belief; eighth, piety; ninth, trust; tenth, benevolence; eleventh, beneficence; and twelfth, light.[3]

When the Third Messenger came towards the ships of the sun and the moon, he commanded three servants to move the ships and told the Great Architect to fashion the New Paradise;[4] he also commanded three Chariots of Water, Wind and Fire to raise themselves up. Therefore, when the two ships of the sun and the moon began to sail and reach the middle of the cosmos, movement and time came into being.[5] Time consists of a *month* that is divided into thirty days and into the new Moon and the full Moon; a *day*

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[1] Middle Persian: Narisah Yazd; Parthian: Narisaf Yazd; Avestan: Nairiyō.saŋha; Pahlavi texts: Nēryōsang; and Persian: Narse and Narsī. The word Nēryōsang means 'the masculine feature or the feature of man'. Theodore bar Konai speaks of the legend that Hormazd created Narse as a 15 year old boy and made him nude at the back of the Devil so that the women would fall in love with him and wish him from the Devil. See M. Bahār, *Jostārī dar Asatīr-e Irān (A Research in Iranian Mythology)* (Tehran 1983), pp. 47-48; A. Tafazzoli, "Wooing of Afrāsyāb to Spandārmað", *Iran-Nāmeh*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Winter 1988), pp. 196-7. The nakedness of Narisah Yazd and the Maiden of Light in Manichaean Middle Persian texts is to tempt the demons who are chained in the sky gates so that the imprisoned light-particles can be released through them. Cf. Middle Persian text no. 6.

[2] Middle Persian text no. 2.

[3] In Syriac text no. 97, we see the epithet of 'Twelve Maidens' for the Third Messenger.

[4] The ruler of this paradise is Primordial Man.

[5] Syriac text no. 97; Middle Persian text no. 7.

consisting of a *rāstwān* (twenty four hours or a circle of the sun); a *year* consisting of twelve months which are equal to twelve constellations, divided into spring, summer, autumn and winter.[1]

The Third Messenger transformed himself into masculine and feminine bodies and along with the Maiden of Light appeared nude in front of the chained demons in the sky. As the male demons saw the nude bodies of the Third Messenger and the Maiden of Light, their lusts were stimulated. They ejaculated and threw down the light-particles through their seeds to the earth. Part of the seed falls into the water and becomes a huge sea-monster, which is overcome by the Adamas of Light. Part falls on land and forms the trees and plants. The female demons who were pregnant from unions in hell, miscarry, and their abortions, containing less light than the male semen, fall to earth and people it with the five kinds of living creatures, which correspond with the five species of demons.[2] The Third Messenger concealed his bodies to give back those light-particles to their own deities. But they did not accept the particles, like men who have disgust at their own vomited foods. So, their semen was shed into the earth, half on dry and half on wet regions.[3] From the semen which was poured on dry regions, plant, flowers, grasslands, seedless plants and all kinds of vegetation came into being. The Greed-Demon had also mixed his spirit with them. And the half which was shed into the sea was transformed into an ugly, horrible robber-giant who came out of the sea, spreading sins throughout the world.[4]

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[1] Middle Persian text no. 8.

[2] Cf. M. Boyce, *Reader* (Leiden 1975), p. 6.

[3] Syriac text no. 97.

[4] According to Syriac text no. 97, the semen of the demons which was poured into the sea, was transformed into a horrible giant who was similar to the Devil or the King of Darkness. Then, the Adamas of Light was sent to fight with him. He fought and defeated the giant. First, he turned him on his back, struck on his jugular vein, beat his shield to his jaws, and pressed one foot on his thigh and another on his chest.

Then, the Living Spirit sent the Adamas of Light, one of his Five Sons, to spread the giant's limbs into the north, the west and the east. The Adamas of Light also defeated the giant, overthrew him and stood on him so that he could not commit a sin.[1]

When the demons and she-demons, the wrath-demons, little and great monsters, biped, quadruped, winged, poisonous, creeping-body, and all those who were primordially pregnant by infernal demons and also were imprisoned in the sky, they saw the splendour and beauty of the Third Messenger, they were so capricious that they became unconscious. So, they aborted their offspring who fell down on the earth. Then, they stood on the ground, ate the fruits of the trees, grew and became as grand giants and demons. The Greed-Demon entered their bodies through the same fruits. They were overwhelmed into lust and slept together.[2]

The Creation of Man

The Greed-Demon again saw that the sun and the moon were the guards of the god's splendour and always took light-particles from him and from the material world to purify and guard them through the chariots of the sun and the moon and eventually pass them to

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[1] Middle Persian text no. 5; Andreas-Henning cited a passage which described the defeat of the giant by the Adamas of Light (*Mir. Man.* i., p. 182, n. Z; cf. M. Boyce, *op. cit.*, p. 65). According to this text, the Adamas of the Light, like a lion released from the cage, presses his left foot on the chest and neck, and his right foot on the thigh of the giant (there is not, of course, the word 'thigh' in the text, but it has been used in a similar Syriac tradition. Cf. Syriac text no. 97). Also we know that the Adamas of Light cast down the giant like a deer in the hunting ground, the head to the east, the foot to the west, the middle to the four mountains, waist to the north, and face to the south (cf. *Mir. Man.* I, p. 182). The Adamas of Light is the Coptic name of Wisbed, because he is the Adamas (brilliant) that shines in the sky and is seen from every side. He is the Wisbed of the cosmos in the north, the east, the south and the west, and its keeper. Cf. Middle Persian text no. 5.

[2] Middle Persian text no. 6.

the New Paradise. The Greed-Demon, filled with rage, wished to proceed everywhere. So he thought it well to create two human beings, masculine and feminine, based on the two masculine-feminine shapes of the Third Messenger, so that they would be her clothes and sheathes, and she would dominate them and they would not be taken from her. She would be eternally free from want and she would never be agonized. Therefore, she created two grand demons, masculine and feminine, called Ashaqlūn and Naqbā'īl, from those demonic aborted offspring, descended from the sky.[1] They were lion-bodies, lustful, raging and sinful predators whom she put on as garments and concealed herself in them.

In this way, the Greed-Demon taught Ashaqlūn and Naqbā'īl lust and cohabitation. They cohabitated together and bore dragon offspring. The Greed-Demon also took and ate them to create the bodies of two masculine-feminine creatures from them. Then Ashaqlūn and Naqbā'īl taught all the little demons lust and cohabitation and made them cohabitate together too. The Greed-Demon fashioned the result of that cohabitation with her lust and made the body of a masculine being with bones, tendons, flesh, veins and skins.[2] She fastened the light and splendour of the gods – which were primordially mingled with the offspring of giants and

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[1] Parthian texts nos. 16 & 36; Middle Persian text no. 10. The other name of Ashaqlūn is Sendīd, and the other name of Namrā'īl is Pēsūs. In Syriac texts Namrā'īl is called Naqbā'īl.

[2] The limbs of this body are also described as 'seven evil creatures'. Cf. Middle Persian text no. 24. According to the same text, human limbs totally consist of 360 parts. The human body is sometimes described as microcosm, that is, an imitation of the macrocosm in which human beings can be joyful and deceived (Middle Persian text no. 25); even the microcosm in some of Middle Persian and Parthian texts is called 'micro-corpse' and the macrocosm 'macro-corpse' (cf. texts nos. 18, 1, 3, 25 & 2.). In Coptic texts, the human body has been described as a fourteen-head dragon; seven heads on the top of the body of which two are for sight, two for hearing, two for smelling, and the seventh is the tongue to choose different tastes (cf. text no. 73).

demons – to the body as soul; then, she transmitted her greed and desire, lust and cohabitation, enmity and vilification, jealousy and sinfulness, rage and hot-temper, peevishness and unintelligence, evil-doing, stubbornness and greed, revenge and egotism, agony and sorrow, pain and ache, poverty and need, sickness and senility, and her infection into this masculine creature. He also gave the voices and vowels of those aborted giants to this creature in order to talk and know easily. She created this masculine creature in the likeness of the Third Messenger. Rage, lust and sinfulness rained on him from the giants, the Zodiac and planets so that he became one savage, giant-like and greedy. When the masculine creature was born, he was called Adam (Mp. *Gēhmurd*), who is the first masculine human being.

Another time, the Greed-Demon fashioned a feminine body with bones, tendons, flesh, veins and skins. She imprisoned the light and splendour of the gods – which were primordially mingled with the offspring of giants and demons – into this feminine body, taught her greed and desire, lust and cohabitation, enmity, vilification and other sinfulness. Therefore, when this feminine creature was born, they called her Eve (Mp. *Murdyānag*), who is the first woman. Her sinfulness was more that of than Adam, and she was taught the speech and voice of those aborted giants. The Greed-Demon fashioned Eve in the likeness of the feminine body of the Maiden of Light and filled her with sinfulness and lust so as to deceive Adam.

When these two first masculine and feminine human beings were born and grown in the world, the Greed-Demon and the great demons had great pleasure. The chief of the demons established the committee of great giants and demons and told the two human races: "I created the earth and the sky, the sun and the moon, water and fire, trees and plants, domestic and wild animals for you so that you may have pleasure and joy with them. Be happy and grant my wish!" She then appointed a great terrifying dragon as their

guard not to let anybody take them away since these great giants and demons are afraid of gods and worried that they come would forth and imprison them. And those two offspring have been fashioned like the face and the body of divinities.

In this way, when the first woman and man began to exist, the Greed-Demon was awake in them. They were filled with rage, dammed up the springs, hurt the trees and all plants and were not afraid of the gods.[1] The Five Elements or five children of the Primordial Man appealed to the Father of Greatness, the Mother of Life, the Primordial Man and the Living Spirit to send someone to redeem those two human beings, to present to them *logos* and benefaction, and to save them from the Devil and the demons.

The Gods of Light sent off Jesus the Splendour and the Maiden of Light towards the demons to imprison them so as to save the two human beings.[2] Then, Jesus the Splendour returned to Adam and informed him of the secret of the Paradise, Gods, the Realm of Darkness, the Devil, the Greed-Demon and other demons, the earth and skies; he frightened him of Eve and asked him to flee from this evil woman.[3] Having done so, Adam looked up and wept, cried as

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[1] Middle Persian text no. 10; the creation of the first woman and man in Coptic texts is greatly influenced by Christian traditions. In Coptic text no. 59, we see that when the first woman and man were created, they stood in the paradise; someone orders them not to eat from the tree so that they cannot discern the good from the evil. But Adam was tempted by Eve and ate the fruit of that forbidden tree. The text is presumably distorted it; it does not have a Manichaean feel. From the Manichaean point of view, the first woman and man were not put in paradise at all while they are the offspring of the demons.

[2] According to a Sogdian text (no. 57), at the time of the rise of Jesus the Splendour, two hundred demons descended from the high sky to the sphere; they become excited and angry in the world because their circulation and spiritual veins are attached to the sphere.

[3] Jesus the Splendour says to Adam that his fathers are in the Paradise of Light and half of Adam's soul is mingled with matter; he stands in front of the stings of the leopards and elephants, the predators and dogs eat it; it is mixed with

a groaning lion, plucked his hair, hit on his chest and cried: "Curse, Curse to the fashioner of my body, who drew me into slavery!"[1]

Then, Ashaqlūn cohabited with Eve who gave birth to an ugly offspring named the Red-Haired-Son. Later, this son cohabited with his mother and she gave birth to two daughters named Wise-World and Greed-Daughter. The Red-Haired-Son married Greed-Daughter and let Wise-World marry the White-Faced-Son.

There were divine light and splendour in Wise-World while Greed-Daughter lacked them. One of the angels saw Wise-World and told her: "Keep yourself well, for you will give birth to two sons who fulfill the joy of God." Then, he slept with her and she gave birth to two daughters named Fryād and Pūrfryād. When the White-Faced-Son heard this, he burnt with rage and was filled with sorrow and told her: "How did you bring these two forth? I think they are the offspring of the Red-Haired-Son who has slept with you!" Wise-World told him of that angel. The White-Faced-Son, then, went to his mother and complained of Cain's deed and said: "Do you know what he has done with my sister and wife?" As soon as Cain knew this, he went to the White-Faced-Son and beat on his head with a stone, killed him and took Wise-World as his wife.

When Ashaqlūn and Eve saw this, they became depressed. Ashaqlūn taught her magic doings in order to enchant Adam. She did so and became nude and brought him a diadem of flowers from the Tree of Life. When Adam saw her, he slept with her, filled with

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everything and is chained in the trap of darkness. Then, he takes Adam up and makes him eat of the 'Tree of Life'.

[1] Syriac text no. 97; we read in the same passage that Jesus the Splendour domesticates Adam with his specific art. He wakes up after drowning in a deep sleep. Jesus the Splendour separates the charming demons from him and binds some of them with chain. In the Arabic text no. 87, we see that Jesus the Splendour puts Ashaqlūn and Naqbā'īl in chains.

a magnitude of lust. Then, Eve became pregnant and gave birth to a pretty and healthy baby.

When Ashaqlūn knew this, he became sorrowful and sick and told Eve: "This is not our baby, it is strange to us!" Eve wanted to kill the baby, but Adam took it with him, placed it on the earth at once and drew seven circles around the baby, called it "Alive' and 'Pure';[1] saying "I'll feed it with cow's milk and fruits!" Then he took the baby and went far away.

Ashaqlūn set off the demons to seize the tree and the cow and to take away them from Adam. As soon as Adam saw this, he took the baby and drew three circles around it. He inscribed the name of the Father of Greatness on the first circle; the Primordial Man on the second; the Living Spirit on the third one. Then he appealed to his God and said: "If I'm sinful, what is this baby's fault?" One of those three divinities approached at once. In this way, Ashaqlūn and the other demons were evaded.

Afterwards, there appeared a tree to Adam. It was a Lotus of which sap was leaking. He fed the baby with the sap, called him by name, and after a while the baby was called Seth.[2]

Ashaqlūn, then, was hostile to Adam and the baby. He told Eve: "Go to Adam, may you return him toward us!" She went and charmed Adam. Then she slept with him lustfully. When Seth saw Adam, he scolded and advised him: "Let's flee to the east, towards divine light and logos!" Adam accepted and did not cohabit with Eve for eighty years and he was a righteous man then.[3] Adam and Seth went to a monastery. Adam stayed there up to the time of his death. Then he flew to Paradise. Seth, Fryād and Pūrfryād and their

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[1] Middle Persian text no. 48; Arabic text no. 87.

[2] In Arabic text no. 81 he is called Shātel. According to Coptic texts, he stands at the position of holy men such as Noah and Enoch. Cf. text no. 61.

[3] Middle Persian text no. 48; Arabic text no. 87.

mother, Wise-World, still stayed there up to the moment of their death. Eve, the Red-Haired-Son and Greed-Daughter went to Hell.[1]

Therefore, all the people are of the race of Adam and Eve. Although they are similar to the Third Messenger and the Maiden of Light, they have also devil-like and demonic features. However, there are particles of light imprisoned in every person. So, their major function is to release them.

After a while, the Great Nous came down and helped human beings with his Five Limbs: Reason, Mind, Intelligence, Thought and Understanding. He, as a son among the gods,[2] along with Jesus the Splendour and the Maiden of Light fashioned the temple of the microcosm, in the same way that the sun, the moon, and the Perfect Man fashioned the temple of the great world or macrocosm.[3]

At last, the gates of the prisons were opened and the imprisoned light-particles were released. All the pious ones and the followers of the Great Nous were saved.[4] The Great Nous sent some messengers for the impure and polluted human beings in order to present them with the fruit of Gnosis.

The Fate of the Soul after Death

If death comes to a righteous one, the Primordial Man will send forth a divinity named the Just Judge as a guide, along with three angels who have a jar of water, a set of garments and a light diadem, respectively. A young figure similar to the righteous one

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[1] Arabic text no. 87.

[2] Coptic text no. 60.

[3] Coptic text no. 63; the Great Nous is the god of wisdom and gospel. He sends messengers for the polluted spirits of human beings to bring forth 'Gnosis of Knowledge' for the offspring of man. However, the Devil and the Greed-Demon try to draw their souls to forgetfulness, sleep and intoxication. The awakened soul is called 'the New Man'. This feature is taken from Saint Paul. Cf. M. Boyce, *Reader* (Leiden 1975), p. 7.

[4] Middle Persian text no. 22.

accompanies them. The Devil, the Greed-Demon and the other demons appear. As the righteous one sees them, he/she seeks help from the Just Judge and the other three angels. They approach him/her. As soon as the demons see them, they flee from there. The divinities take the righteous one with them, they clothe him/her in the garments, put the diadem on his/her head and the jar of water on his/her palm. The righteous one flies through the Column of Glory[1] to the Moon, the Sun and the New Paradise, in front of the Primordial Man and the Mother of Life. His/her corpse remains fallen there. The Sun and the Moon absorb its forces that are water, fire and breeze. What remains of the corpse, consisting of pure darkness, falls into hell. Also Rahangweh Yazd (the best-Chariot-Pulling God), a divinity in the Chariots of the Moon and the Sun, is the gatherer and the keeper of all the saved lights.[2]

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[1] The Column of Glory is both a divinity and the passage of the redeemed lights. The Milky Way is one of his manifestations.

[2] In the Middle Persian text no. 8, st. 22, we read: "The Third Messenger stands Rahangweh Yazd in the chariots of the Sun and the Moon in order to...the light and splendour which were swallowed by the demons and takes them in prison..."; unfortunately the rest of the fragment is corrupted, but one can presume that Rahangweh Yazd, lodged in the chariots of the Moon and the Sun, is responsible for gathering and keeping all the redeemed light-particles. Although one can be certain here that the divinity lodges in the chariots of the Sun and the Moon, his/her function has not been discerned in the surviving passages. An intelligent reading of Rahangweh Yazd (the Best-Chariot-Pulling God) is suggested by my colleague Dr. H. Rezā'ī Bāghbīdī ("On the Unknown Epithet of a Manichaean God" in *Central Asiatic Journal*, ed. G. Stary, 46 [2002] 1, pp. 1-4), but his justification of identifying the deity with Kišwarwāryazd (the Column of Glory) is not sufficiently convincing because the sudden changing of the name and epithet of a deity in a specific short stanza is strange. In addition, the refined and redeemed light-particles (souls) pass respectively through the Column of Glory to the chariots of the Moon and the Sun and finally to New Paradise. So how can the Column of Glory stand in the chariots of the Moon and the Sun?

As for a human being who has accepted the Manichaean religion and accompanied the righteous ones, but who also has done evil deeds, when such a one dies, both the deities and the demons approach him/her. He/she pleads with them and implores them to remember his/her good deeds. The deities will save him/her from the demons' claws.

A sinful human who is overwhelmed with greed and lust, faces the torture and agony of the devil and the demons at the moment of his/her death. The divinities approach him/her bearing nice garments in their hands. He/she thinks that they have come to save him/her while actually they want to scold him/her. He/she is reborn in another body in this inferior material world and remains there for a while until his/her final destiny, falling into hell.

These are the three ways in which human souls will take death: the New Paradise for the righteous one; the horrible world or peril for the enemies who, at the same time, accompany the righteous one and guard the religion; and finally hell for the sinful.[1]

Afterwards, the Primordial Man from the north, the Third Messenger[2] from the east, the Great Architect and the Living Spirit from the west, come forth and stand on the New Paradise looking

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[1] Spirit may be embodied many times before redemption. The attitude is influenced by the Buddhist idea of metamorphosis. There are two traditions for the destiny of the spirit at the eve of death: 1) the spirit goes to the Just Judge to be justified. It should either go to the New Paradise or come back again to the world, passing the Mingled Period, or it should go to the inferno; 2) the righteous spirit leaves the body and stands in front of one of the redeeming gods accompanied by three angels who bear its signs of victory: a garland, a diadem, and a celestial garment. The spirit takes all these presents and passes through the Column of Glory to the Moon, the Sun and the New Paradise. Cf. M. Boyce, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

[2] The name of the deity in *al-Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm is Bashīr 'Messenger' (G. Flügel, *al-Fihrist*, p. 336; *al-Fihrist*, Persian tr. by M. Tajaddod, p. 597. The divinity is most probably Narisah Yazd or the Third Messenger. See also D. Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 783, n. 193.

at hell. The righteous ones fly towards those lights, quickly reach the League of Gods and look down at hell and the sinful ones.

The End of the World

At the end of the world, the Devil accompanied by the demons tried to spread evil throughout the world by cohabitation and birth, and therefore, to make the imprisonment of the light-particles eternal. He makes more bodily prisons everyday and tries to deceive women – who have fewer light-particles – and to spread the seeds of lust and cohabitation. In this way, more souls are imprisoned and the release from the material body will be more difficult.

At this time, Jesus[1] comes again and sets up the throne of justice. All the light-particles released by the redeeming gods such as the Third Messenger, Jesus the Splendour, and the Great Nous, fly through the Column of Glory to the moon, the sun, and then to the New Paradise. The process continues until there is nothing left of light that the sun and the moon can refine. Then, Atlas who is the bearer of the eight earths leaves his position. The skies and the earths fall down and they are disordered.[2] The earths break down and the cries of the sinful ones reach up to the skies. The fiery, watery, and poisonous walls and all the columns break down,[3] and a grand fire boils out and burns everything in order to release every particle of light in them. This burning and sparkling of fire lasts 1468 years. When these events end and the evil Darkness sees the redemption of light-particles and the flying of the gods and the guards, it weeps and decides to fight. His armies scold him. Darkness falls at the grave which was dug for him. A rock will be put on him as great as the world. He will be smashed and cannot

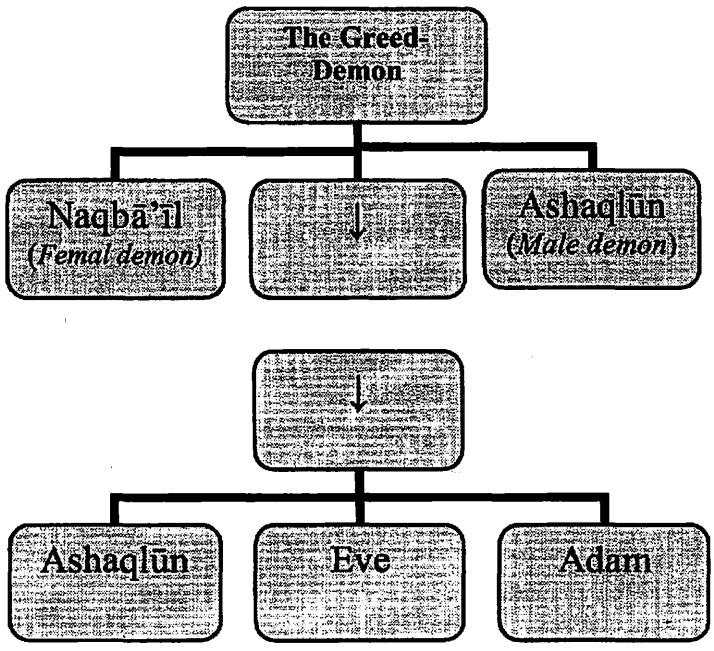
[1] On three different characters of Jesus, see Chapter I.
[2] Arabic text no. 81.
[3] Middle Persian text no. 34.

cause oppression again.[1] Two substances of light and darkness will be separated from each other forever. The last light-particles will be released and they will fashion a divine body called the Last God.[2]

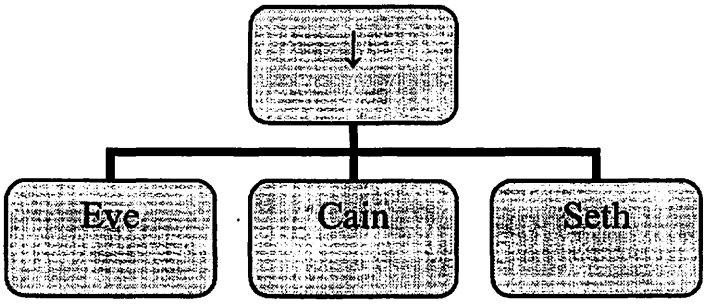
Finally, the New Paradise will join the Paradise of Light. The gods, all the spirits and the released light-particles which have been clothed with the celestial garments, and have diadems of light on their heads and jars of water on their palms, will be in front of the Father of Greatness; a splendid visit that the creation of the material world previously obstructed. Now, the time will be eternal, all beings will become integrated light and the golden primordial era will begin again.

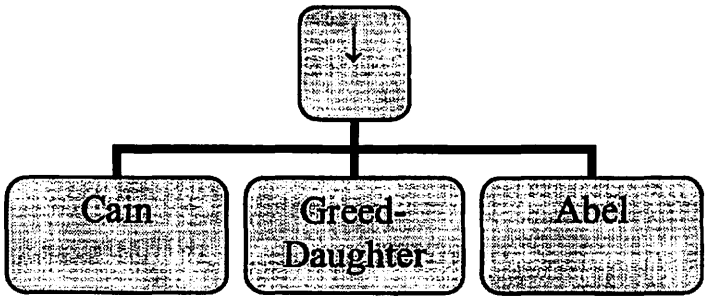
The Creation of the First Human Beings

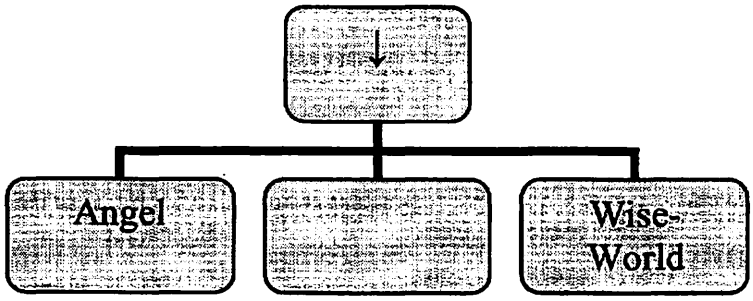
The Genealogy of Human Beings during the Period of the Mingling of Light and Darkness in Manichaean Cosmogony

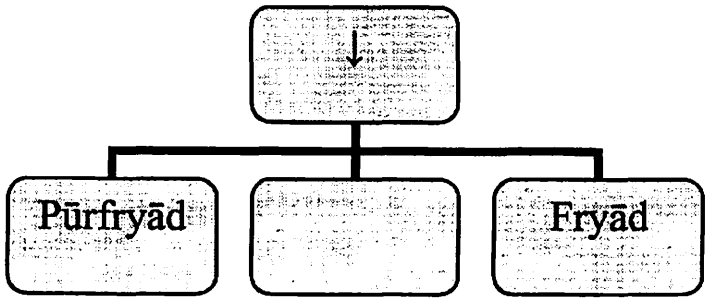


[1] Arabic text no. 86.
[2] Cf. M. Boyce, *op. cit.*, p. 86.


Eve
Cain
Seth


Cain
Greed-
Daughter
Abel


Angel
Wise-
World


Pūrfryād
Fryād

Abolqasem Esmailpour, Manichaean Gnosis & Creation Myth
Sino-Platonic Papers, 156 (July, 2005)

III

Mani's Pictorial Manifesto

Introduction

What was the *Ārdahang* (Pe. *Arzhang*)[1] and what kind of paintings or motifs had it illustrated? This is the quest of our study, which we are to answer to the greatest possible extent allowed by the surviving documents. One can say, first, that the *Ārdahang* was Mani's pictorial manifesto in the third century of our era. It is quite probable that this lost pictorial masterpiece was illustrated by the prophet's disciples or followers in later eras.[2]

Mani himself states in *Kephalaia*, a collection of his sayings and discourses, that "all the prophets have written about their religions and wisdom before me, but I have both written and illustrated them."[3]

Mani called his faith the 'Religion of Light'. It is, like all the other Gnostic approaches, a mystic and illuminative doctrine which manifests the descent of the soul of light into the material world. The main motive of the creation of the cosmos is, in fact, the redemption of the imprisoned light-particles from this world.

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[1] *Arzhang* is the Persian name of the Parthian *Ārdahang* recorded by Classical Persian historians.

[2] Professor Sundermann, after reading the manuscript of this book, among other valuable suggestions, noted that there are some traits that show that the *Ārdahang* was not illustrated by Mani himself.

[3] Polotsky-Böhlig, *Kephalaia* II (Stuttgart 1937), p. 154; cf. also I. Gardner, *The Kephalaia of the Teacher* (Leiden 1995).

Iranian mysticism is also an expression of the imprisonment of the human soul in the material body. So, the Religion of Light is by itself the promoter of a special Iranian Gnosticism which has roots in the Sassanian dynasty and even before that. The passionate song of Nay (traditional flute) described in the Prologue to the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī, the great Iranian mystic and poet of 13th century AD, expresses such a motif as well.[1] It relates undoubtedly the descent of the human soul and the separation from one's transcendental essence. The separation and alienation of human spiritual essence can be seen through the Religion of Light as the imprisonment of light-essence in this material world and in the material body of human beings.

Mani learned the pictorial tradition from his Gnostic predecessors. He, as well as his father, Patēg, flourished in the community of the Mughtasila (the Baptizing sect). During his life in Babylon, Mani learned the art of painting and drawing, as well as the art of *nibēgan-nīgārīh* (book-painting) and calligraphy, and in this showed a marvelous talent. He developed his own script based on the Syrian script known as Estrangelo, and many Middle Iranian translations of his books, and those of his disciples, were written in this script.[2]

Arzhang in Classical Persian Literature

Classical Persian literature that speaks of Mani chiefly emphasizes his artistic character and includes some legendary narrations. For instance, the *Shahname* of Ferdowsi described Mani as follows:

> Here came forth an eloquent man from China
> That the earth never saw such an artist.

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[1] See Chapter VI.

[2] Cf. H.-J. Klimkeit, "On the Nature of Manichaean Art" in M. Heuser and H. J. Klimkeit, *Studies in Manichaean Literature and Art* (Wiesbaden 1998), p. 270-271.

He fulfilled his wishes with his skillfulness
An intellectual man called Mani.
I am a Messenger, he said, equipped with the art of painting
Superior to the other prophets.[1]

It is surprising that Mani's detailed biography was not well known in Iran during Ferdowsi's era at the 10th century AD. Ferdowsi called him a painter from China who came forth to the court of Shapur, whose unkindness was so great that it led Mani to an unfortunate destiny. We know, on the contrary, through the documentary Manichaean scriptures of Turfan, that Mani propagandized his religion freely during Shapur's period and even wrote his famous book *Šāburagān*, of which fragments have been preserved, in his name.[2] Later, during the reign of Bahram, Mani was interrogated and executed, and his followers fled to Central Asia and China. They created a precious literary and artistic tradition in the vast regions throughout the Silk Road.

Bayān al-Adyān (The Expression of the Religions), a classical Persian work written by Abu'l-Ma'ālī, describes Mani's story as follows:

> He was a master of painting who flourished in the kingdom of Shapur, son of Ardeshir. He asserted prophecy among the magi and his demonstration was the art of calligraphy and painting. They say he drew a line on a piece of fine silk. When they took out the silk thread, the line disappeared. He created a pictorial book designed with many kinds of paintings which were called Mani's *Arzhang*, and it is in the Ghaznein's treasuries.[3]

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[1] A. Ferdowsi, *The Shahname* (Moscow 1968), vol. 7, pp. 250-251.
[2] See D. N. Mackenzie, "Mani's Šābuhragān" in *BSOAS*, vols. 42/43 (London 1979).
[3] Abu'l-Ma'ālī, M.H.A., *Bayān al-Adyān (The Expression of the Religions)*, ed. by A. Eqbāl Āshtīyanī (Tehran 1312 AH), p. 17; cf. A. Afshār Shīrāzī, *Mutūn-e Arabī va Fārsī dar bāre-ye Māni va Mānavīyyat (Arabic and Persian Texts on*

The document shows that the *Ārdahang*'s paintings were preserved until the end of the 5th century AH/11th AD in Ghazne.

Awfī wrote in his *Jawāmi'al-Hikāyāt wa Lawāmi'al-Riwāyāt* about Mani the painter:

> ...And his claim was chiefly in the art of painting. He was skillful and perfect at it. And one sign of his skills was that he drew a circle on a large silk cloth. Then he took a compass and circled on it, showing that it was matched with his drawn circle.
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> ...and he (Mani) went to India, Kashmir and Tibet. The people of Tibet and Turkistan adhered to him. He made idols and deceived them with his paintings, wandering on the mountains there and not lodging at one place. And during his wandering, when he reached the cleft of a mountain with running water and a fantastic sphere around and a narrow entrance, he then chose that as his lodge and brought food with him for a year. No one knew of him. Then, one day he told his followers: 'I will fly to the heavens and will stay there for one year. After a year, on a certain day, you should come to a certain mount, bringing a horse so that I come with you and announce my religious ceremonies and the gift of my religious law to you.' Then he suddenly concealed himself in the cave, supplying himself with a large epistle in the form of paper scroll which was very fine and white as the shell of an egg. He drew marvelous paintings on it during the year. At the promised day, he took the pictorial epistle into his hand and came out. He said: 'I was serving at the court of the god of heavens. He commanded me to conceal his commandments and this is the book of God.' When the people saw it, and all were impotent to create it; they believed in and confirmed it. They called it Mani's *Arzhang* and it is still preserved in the treasuries of the emperor of China.[1]

Mani and Manichaeism) in S. H. Taqīzādeh, *Māni va Dn-e `ū (Mani and His Religion)* (Tehran, 1956), p. 491.

[1] A. Afshār Shīrāzī, *op. cit.*, pp. 509, 511-512.

If we accept Awfī's narrative, we can presume that Mani's *Ārdahang* was at hand in the Turkistan of China up to the beginning of 7th century AH/13th century AD. After Mani's death and the cruel assassination of his followers in the following centuries, most Manichaean artistic works including the *Ārdahang* were destroyed.

Up to the beginning of the 20th century when Manichaean scriptures were discovered in Turfan, no one knew of the precious treasures of Gnostic-Manichaean literature. [1] The *Ārdahang*, however, has never been found since then, except some commentaries in Middle Persian and Parthian to which we will refer in the following pages.

Asad Tūsī, quoting from his father, called Mani 'the Painter of Light':

> The Painter of Light cast down the veil of darkness,
> As far as the earth, which, like the sky, became colourful like the *Arthang*.[2]

One can actually call Mani the Painter of Light, for he always sought light, that is, the light-particles lost among the particles of the material cosmos. The whole world is mingled with darkness and the light-particles of the spiritual realm have been imprisoned in it. The prophesied mission of humans is to release these light-particles.

The Painter of Light offered a new miracle for his prophetic mission: painting and portrait drawing. Ḥamdollāh Mostowfī, an Iranian historian, says:

> In Shapur's dynasty, Mani the painter claimed prophecy, and his prophetic sign was that he drew small and large circles, and short lines

[1] See Z. Gulacsi, *Manichaean Art in Berlin Collections* (Turnhout 2001), p. 6.
[2] Asadī Tūsī, *Lughat-i Furs*, ed. by A. Dabīr Sīyāqī (Tehran 1978), p. 67.

> in such a way that when they used compasses and rulers, they saw they were exactly rendered. And he drew the shape of the inhabited quarter of the earth and the other uninhabited three quarters on the globes of some eggs which showed all cities, mountains, seas and rivers. He made a marvelous shirt, such that when somebody put it on it was visible and by putting it off, it was invisible.[1]

To approach such a miracle, Mani had to leave the people, and he preferred solitude. So he sought asylum in a cave in the way that the other prophets did. Therefore, he hid himself from the people's eyes. His absence lasted one year. Mīrkhwānd presents a fantastic description in his *Rowḍat al-Ṣafā*:

> And Mani was a unique painter. They say he drew a circle with a diameter of five meters. When they examined it with a set of compasses, there weren't any differences in the perimeter at all. Therefore, he became famous and won a vast celebrity in India and Khatā (West China), for he drew marvelous icons and he was continually traveling throughout the eastern countries.
>
> It is said that during his journey he approached a mount which had a cave containing a fantastic space with fresh air and a spring; the cave had only one entrance. Mani, hiding himself from the people, brought food for a year to the cave and told his followers that he would fly to the heavens and his settlement there would last a year. After a year, I will come down to the earth and will bring good news from God to you. And that godless prophet told the community that they should be waiting in a certain place near a cave on the eve of the second year. After this statement of his will, he disappeared and hid himself in the cave. He was busy drawing pictures for a year. He painted marvelous and fantastic portraits on a tablet and called it Mani's *Arzhang*. After a year, he reappeared near the entrance of the cave holding the tablet in his hand, a tablet

[1] Hamdollāh Mostowfī, *Tārīkh-e Gozīdeh (Selected History)*, quoted from A. Afshār Shīrāzī, *op. cit.*, p. 522.

painted with novel pictures, adorned with different marvelous icons. Everybody who saw the tablet would say:

The time will bring a thousand icons
There isn't but one in such a way
That exists in the mirror of our vision.

The people were surprised at seeing the tablet. Mani claimed that he had brought it forth from heaven as his miracle.[1]

The Interpretation of the *Ārdahang*

What was the *Ārdahang* and what icons did it exhibit? Undoubtedly its content was so precious that, according to the legends, it forced the Painter of Light to live in a cave alone for a full year. In addition, the *Ārdahang*'s importance was so high that when his death time approached, according to *Kephalaia*, he foresaw his time of torture and persecution and said:

I weep over the paintings of my Picture[2]

The *Ārdahang* was undoubtedly Mani's pictorial manifesto. His doctrine was hardly comprehensible due to the complex mythology and various marvelous deities. The motifs such as the wonderful structure of the cosmos with ten firmaments and eight earths, the Arks of the Moon and the Sun, Three Wheels of Light, Wind and Fire, Miraculous Turning Wheel, Three Columns and the Five Arches, and New Paradise. The Light paradise, the Realm of Darkness, the Greed-Demon, and the other similar figures overwhelm the reader in surprise and obscurity.

Obviously, it was inevitable for a painter to draw these marvelous religious motifs and to explain them for the Hearers (Mp. *Nīyōšāgān*: the lowest rank of Manichaean community). So one can conclude that the icons of the *Ārdahang* described the

[1] Mīrkhwānd, *Rowḍat al-Ṣafā*; quoted from A. Afshār Shīrāzī, *op. cit.*, pp. 525-526.
[2] H.-J. Klimkeit, *Manichaean Art and Calligraphy* (Leiden 1982), p. 16.

cosmogonical doctrine, creation, the process of cosmogony, the structure of the cosmos, the end of the world or eschatology, which would have been presented as some portraits in the shape of a canonical book, precious ritual scrolls or, as they say, in the shape of tablets.

According to some Manichaean manuscripts (e.g. M 219),[1] the tradition of *pardeh-khāni* (reading through the portraits) in front of the audience was relevant during the pre-Islamic period. Mani enjoyed the tradition greatly, and most probably drew the *Ārdahang*'s icons on the *pardeh*s (curtains) or scrolls. In the Islamic period, this tradition remained alive, as the continuation of an old Sassanian tradition, to explain the epic episodes of the Shahname. The tradition is still alive in some regions of Iran, especially in *ghahve-khāneh's* (Iranian traditional coffee shops). It is also known as the tradition of *naqqālī* (minstrelsy), and there are still local minstrels and the manuscripts of *naqqālān* (minstrels) in some regions.

Only few pieces of interpretation of the *Ārdahang* have been preserved. One can deduce from the surviving fragments that there was a comprehensive narration of Manichaean religious paintings of which most parts have been destroyed. One of these interpretations is a text from the treatise the *Ārdahang Wifrās* (*The Interpretation of the Ārdahang*). It was preserved in a Parthian manuscript, *M 35*:

> ...and the story of the Great Fire: like unto (the way in which) the Fire, with powerful wrath, swallows this world and enjoys it; like unto (the way in which) this fire that is in the body, swallows the exterior fire that is (lit. comes) in fruit and food and enjoys it. Again like unto (the story in which) two brothers who found a treasure, and a pursuer lacerated each other, and they died; like unto (the fight in which) Ohya, Lewyatin (Leviathan),

[1] See M. Boyce, *Reader* (Leiden 1975), p. 182, fragment dl.

> and Raphael lacerated each other, and they vanished; like unto (the story in which) a lion cub, a calf in a wood (or: on a meadow), and a fox lacerated them both, [and they vanished, or died]. Thus [the Great Fire swallows, etc.] both of the fires...[1]

The Great Fire is the fire which, according to Manichaean cosmogonical myth, appears at the end of the world, spreads everywhere and swallows the whole universe in such a way that the last particles of light will finally be released.

If we accept that the *Ārdahang*'s pictorial manifesto has drawn the process of creation and eschatology, then, based upon Manichaean manuscripts and various interpretations, we can describe its drawings and ultimately reconstruct it, as I did in the case of the Manichaean creation myth through various scattered texts, including fragments in Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, Coptic, Chinese, etc.[2]

One can even see some pictorial features of the *Ārdahang* in the surviving works of later eras. Professor Chao Ḥuashan has recently recognized some examples of Manichaean paintings some of which represent cosmogonical themes of the *Ārdahang*. For instance, the wall-painting of cave no. 38b in Bäzäqlīq shows a picture of the Tree of Life (Shajirat al-Ḥayāt) with worshippers gathering under it; a grand tree with green leaves and twelve grand flowers and innumerable fruits. The Tree of Life is the symbol of the Realm of Light and has three branches representing three phases of creation or three periods of Manichaean cosmogony. Also, in *Mānestān* (monastery) of North Sangim, cave no. 4, a wall-painting shows the Tree of Life and the Tree of Death, which are entwined with each other. The interweaving of the trees of life

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[1] W. B. Henning, "The Book of Giants" in *BSOAS* (1943), pp. 52-47; *idem*, *Selected Papers, Acta Iranica* 15 (Leiden-Téhéran-Liège 1977), pp. 134-135.

[2] See Chapter II; also cf. A. Esmailpour, *Ostūre-ye Āfarīnesh dar Ā'īn-e Mānī (The Myth of Creation in Manichaeism)* (Tehran 2004).

and death represents the mingling of light and darkness, according to Manichaean doctrine, and this is most probably considered to be one of the important motifs of the *Ārdahang*.[1]

Manichaean paintings, however, are influenced by Iranian, Chinese and Buddhist art. The influence causes Manichaean art to imitate Buddhist themes. For instance, one can recognize lotuses in most Manichaean figures of deities. Colours used in the paintings are purple, red, fiery red, blue, yellow and dark green. The artists used gold leaf to enhance the pictures. Eyes are oblique as in Chinese miniatures, and the lips and mouths have been changed to dots with an unparalleled tenderness.[2]

Manichaean art is also rooted in the Parthian art of the Mesopotamian region. We should not, of course, ignore Sassanian artistic tradition. Mani himself learned the Mesopotamian-Syriac pictorial tradition. His followers were undoubtedly inspired by the Parthian art of Mesopotamian regions as well.

The Mongol-Uigur paintings style has also influenced the artistic works of western Turkistan and Iran. However, Manichaean painting – as well as the Religion of Light – is neither Chinese, nor Buddhist, nor Parthian, but uniquely Manichaean because Mani himself was the inventor of a style of painting and a special script and probably the pioneer of Manichaean book-illustration.

It is obvious that Mani was the innovator of miniature art and the first Manichaean artist. Miniature, the art of book-illustration and gilding of the Islamic period, was also influenced by Manichaean art. We can see this influence in the pictorial tradition of the Ilkhanids and the Timurids. Some scholars think that the artistic tradition of Samarkand and Herāt – which itself was under the

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[1] H. Chao, "Investigation of Manichaean Cave Temples in Turfan" in *Iranian Journal of Archeology & History*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Winter 1994), pp. 4-6.

[2] For the Buddhist artistic influence on Manichaean art, see H.-J. Klimkeit, "Indian Motifs in Manichaean Art" in M. Heuser, and H.-J. Klimkeit, *Studies in Manichaean Literature and Art* (Wiesbaden 1998), pp. 291-299.

influence of Manichaean art – even affected the Indian miniature and later painting school of Tibet during the 11-12th centuries AD and was developed by them.[1]

Now, on the basis of the relative comprehensive narration of Manichaean cosmogonical myth, we can tentatively describe the *Ārdahang*'s pictorial manifesto, or rather, based on the surviving documents and manuscripts and the surviving paintings on the *Mānestān* walls of Turfan, we can reconstruct it in imagination. In addition, I think that we can create a new *Ārdahang* based on the present documents and narrations considering that the motif of the *Ārdahang* can still function artistically.

The portraits of the *Ārdahang*, according to the surviving interpretation, have been most presumably drawn in three parts of a book or three 'screens', 'canvases', or 'tablets' to describe three cosmogonical periods. Most likely, it had been painted both as *nibēgān-nīgārīh* or book-illustration and as painting canvases according to the tradition of *pardeh-khānī* or portrait-reading, i.e. narrating religious or epic episodes through portraits.

The function of the Father of Greatness, who is the absolute light and the highest Manichaean deity of the cosmos, is very important. He is described as a four-faced deity who lives in the Light Paradise. According to Manichaean texts, he is shown as an elegant and fertile tree that has never born any bad fruit; he is the absolute light and eternal beauty. The Paradise of Light has a diamond surface, covered with innumerable beautiful mountains, colourful flowers, fruitful trees of the four seasons, fountains of eternal water, gardens, houses, castles and thrones. The motifs of divine figures which might have been illustrated in the *Ārdahang*, were presumably as follows:

[1] H.- J. Klimkeit, *Manichaean Art and Calligraphy* (Leiden 1982), pp. 17ff.

The Motifs of the First Creation: the motifs or the figures of the Mother of Life (mother of the cosmos and the bearer of the Primordial Man); the Primordial Man (Son of God, the symbol of eternal and celestial Man; and the personification of the imprisoned soul in body; Five Sons of Light (the children of the Primordial Man who are: Ether, Wind, Water, Light, and Fire); and the Living Self, a deity symbolizing the imprisoned light in Matter.

The Motifs of the Second Creation: the motifs or the figures of the Beloved of the Lights, a deity who is the illuminator of the battlefield in the redeeming process of the Primordial Man accomplished by the Living Spirit and his Sons); the Great Architect (the builder of the New Paradise, a temporary paradise for the refined light-particles delivered by the Arks of the Moon and the Sun in order to attach to the Paradise of Light at the end of the material world); the Living Spirit (the redeemer of the Primordial Man imprisoned by the King of Darkness at the depths of the pit. He is the creator of the material world built on the dead bodies of the devils); Five Sons of the Living Spirit (the Keeper of Splendour: the king of the first firmament and the guard of three upper firmaments among ten firmaments; the King of Honour: the king of the lower seven firmaments; the Adamas of Light: a deity who is standing in the middle of the cosmos watching it; the King of Glory: the revolver of the Three Wheels of Wind, Water and Fire; Atlas: a deity standing on the 5th earth holding all the eight earths on his shoulders and feet, equal to Atlas of Greek mythology); the Call-God (the 6th son of the Living Spirit, a deity who calls the imprisoned Primordial Man and informs him of his situation); the Answer-God (the 6th son of the Primordial Man who answers to the Call-God).

The Motifs of the Third Creation: the motifs or the figures of this phase of creation are: the Third Messenger (a deity of redemption

and the pattern of the male body of man); Jesus the Splendour (Messenger and man's guide); the Maiden of Light (the redeemer of some imprisoned light-particles and the pattern of the human female body); the column of Glory (the light-column or the Milky Way through which the pure souls and the released light-particles go up to the Chariots of the Moon and the Sun, and eventually to the New Paradise); Rahangweh yazd (a deity who is standing between the Chariots of the Moon and the Sun gathering and keeping the released light-particles)[1]; the Great Nous (the redeeming deity and the guide of human beings, who has five features: Reason, Mind, Intelligence, Thought, and Understanding); the Just Judge (a deity judging the human soul after death); and Istomen Yazd, the last deity in Manichaean cosmogony who is fashioned of the last redeemed light-particles at the end of the world after the Great Fire.

The above imaginary reconstruction of Manichaean portraits is based mostly on Middle Persian and Parthian fragments and similar texts in Syrian, Coptic, Greek and Arabic. Each of the texts shows some parts of the Manichaean narration of cosmogonical myth, the creation of man and eschatology. It is obvious that the most beautiful scene of the Paradise of Light, the battle of the deities of Light with the devils of Darkness, the creation of the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) and the Great Fire of about 1400 years at the end of the world would be among the most important themes of the pictorial-book of the *Ārdahang* which was illustrated by the skillful brush of Mani or his disciples. It is obvious that throughout classical Persian literature, Mani was mostly introduced as a painter and portrayer, rather than a prophet. Most of the Persian historical and literary works ignore his real character as a

[1] See Chapter II, note on *Rahangweh*.

prophet or even as a heretic Gnostic, and if they mention his real personification, they mostly scold his evilness.

The *Ārdahang* was a version of a myth that might be still applicable artistically: clearing out the darkness, the suppression of the devil forces, gathering the imprisoned light-particles in Matter, getting on the Chariots of the Moon and the Sun, and approaching the Father of Greatness's Paradise of Light were always the motifs among human wishes throughout the world, and the *Ārdahang* was, in fact, the narrator and illustrator of the unattainable wishes of humans.

IV

The Role of the Beloved of the Lights In the Process of Manichaean Cosmogony

Introduction

The Beloved of the Lights, whose Middle Persian name is Rōšnān Xwārist, is the same as the Parthian Frih Rōšn, the first deity of the Second Creation of Manichaean cosmological myth. So far, scholars such as F. C. Andreas and W. B. Henning (1932, 5-6), A.V. W. Jackson (1966, 75), M. Boyce (1975, 5) and some others following them, mentioned the deity with "unknown, doubtful, or obscure" function. Even in a recent decade, Prof. S. Lieu states that the deity's "precise function in the plan [of cosmogony] is obscure" and relying only on the facts expressed in the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm, he says that the deity helps the Primordial Man (Lieu: 1992, 15). And finally, M. Heuser, relying only on the Coptic texts, states that "the role of the Beloved of the Lights is almost totally exhausted in his function as an interim being." (Heuser-Klimkeit: 1998, 33) This chapter, however, based on a comparative analysis of some Middle Persian, Parthian, Arabic, Syriac, and Coptic texts, tries to make clear the deity's function as the first direct emanation of the Second Creation.

Middle Persian and Parthian texts

In a Middle Persian fragment, we see Rōšnān Xwārist (the Sweetest of the Lights)[1] together with a group of high-ranking deities, among them Mādar-ī Zīndagān (the Mother of Life), Mihr Yazd (the Living Spirit), Ōhrmizdbay (the Primordial Man) and Nōgsahāfur Yazd (the Great Architect),

> *'wd myhryzd 'wd srygrqyrb qyrdg'r 'wl 'w 'hr'pt hynd 'wd 'b'g 'whrmyzdby 'wd* ***rwšn'nxw'ryst*** *'wd nwgšhr'pwryzd hndym'n 'wy whyšt'w šhry'r dstkš 'st'd hynd.'wš''n ngwcyd 'wd zwwpr nm'c bwrd. 'wš'n 'wh gwpt kw nmbrwm tw, xwd(')y', ky pd xwyš wrz 'wd hww'c 'm'h 'pwryd hwm. 'wt ''z 'wd 'hrmyn 'wd dyw'n 'wd pryg'n pd 'm' bst hynd.* (Boyce: 1975, 63)

> And Mihryazd and the female-formed creator (= the Mother of Life) were led up to Paradise. And together with God Ōhrmizd (= the Primordial Man) and the Sweetest One (the Beloved of the Lights) and the New-World-Maker God (= the Great Architect) they stood saluting before the Sovereign of Paradise. And they prostrated themselves and paid deep homage and spoke thus: 'To you, the Lord, we show reverence, [you] who called us forth through your miraculous power and your word of blessing. And through us you bound Āz (the Greed Demon) and Ahreman (the Devil) and the demons and the witches. (Asmussen: 1975, 123)

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[1] The adjective *xwārist* was translated doubtfully into 'sweetest?' by M. Boyce (1977, 100). Andreas-Henning translated it as 'the most blessed of' (1932, 5). The word comes from the Old Iranian *xwarzišta-*. We can also take it from *xw'r* 'good", as it appears in a geographical name *Xwārazm* (good earth); Av. *Xvārizəma-* (Reichelt: 1968, 97. 111). In Mazandarani or Tabari, an old dialect of Northern Iran, my native language, *xw'r / x'r* means 'good, lovable' and it is still used as a living word. Nyberg takes *xw'r* from *xwāhr* as 'easy, agreeable' (Nyberg: 1974, 220); and Mackenzie as 'light, easy' (Mackenzie: 1971, 95). The Avestan *xvāθra-* is substantive (*hu* + **aθra-* ('breathing': Skt: *Ainti*') 'comfort, happiness, paradise'. The adjective form is xvāθravam 'happy, blessed' (Reichelt: 1968, 281).

The Parthian name of the deity is Frih Rōšn (the Beloved Light).[1] In a Parthian text, M 2 II, we read,

> *`wt kd hrwyn rzmywz'n rngs jm'n `ndr nw'g šhr `ngwd, `wd hwyc qmbyft cy zmyg rwšn `wd qwf'n, `c kw, nw'g šhr dyštn r'd, ``bc'r 'zgryft bwt, `w wxybyh pdm'n gd, `wt 'stwmynyc yzd pt bšn'n hynz'wrystr `wyšt'd, `wt bg'n rzmy'hyg `d pnj rwšn `c xdm drwšt bwt, `b'w `xyzynd hrwyn rdnyn, fryštg'n `wd bg'n rzmywz'n, `wd `wyštynd pt pdwhn `wd wyndyšn `w whyšt šhrd'r: nxwšt `whrmyzdbg `d 'stwmyn yzd, `rd'w'n m'd, fryhrwšn, nrysf yzd, b'myzd, w'd jywndg, yyšw`zyw', qnygrwšn, `wd mnwhmyd wzrg.* (Boyce: 1975, 86, st. 7)

> And when all the fight-seekers rested in the New City (New Paradise) for a while, and also that small part of the earth of light and mountains(?), which it used [as a] tool to make the New City, it came to its convenient place, and also Istomen Yazd (the Last God) stood with the most powerful figures, and the fighting deities with five lights were cured of injury, then all the jems, angels and fight-seeker deities rose, and stood to bestow praise on the King of Paradise: first the Primordial Man with Istomen Yazd (the Last God), the Mother of Life, *the Beloved Light*, the Third Messenger, the Great Architect, the Living Spirit, Jesus the Splendour, the Maiden of Light and the Great Nous.

Also in *Angad Rōšnān I*, a Parthian hymn-cycle, we read,

> *`ngd rwš(n)'n 0 fry'ng pt `xšd*
> *dhwm (z'wr w) hwfry'd 0*
> *pd hrwyn d'hw'n*
> *(`w mn gryw) xwd'y 0 wyn'r'h `wm pdw'c'h*
> *(`wm hwfry'd)(`)h 0 mdy `n dwšmnyn*
> *hrwyn wyg'nyšn 0 (`)c mn wyd'r'h*
> *cy hwyn tnb'r dbgr 0 kym pd drd `bj'myd.*

[1] 'Frih', in my opinion, is an adjective here meaning 'beloved' not a substantive as Prof. Boyce translated it as 'the Friend of the Light' (Boyce: 1975, 9; 1977, 40); see also Sogdian noun *fry'wy (friyāwe)* 'love, desire' (Gharib: 2004, 156-7).

Rich Friend of the beings of Light! In mercy, grant
Me (strength and) succour me with every gift!
Array (my soul), O Lord! Respond to me!
(Succour me) in the midst of the foe!
Make pass from me all the ravages of their deceitful
Body that tortures me with pain.
(Boyce: 1954, 112-113)

On *rwšn'n fry'ng*, it seems to me that it is an equivalent for Rōšnan Xwārist (the Sweetest of the Lights) instead of *fryh rwšn*. It can be translated as 'the Beloved of the Lights', or 'the Beloved Light'. A justification for seeing *rwšn'n fry'ng* in this way is that in the fourth line of the cited fragment, we see 'xwd(')y' as addressed to the deity.

The first Middle Persian fragment quoted above describes the final scene of the Second Creation in which the Living Spirit, having made the world, goes with the other gods of this creation before the Father of Greatness, to entreat him to evoke the Third Messenger. In this way, the process of Third Creation commences.

We are faced, therefore, with a significant deity of this stage of creation who is not, of course, 'an interim figure' as M. Heuser states. (Heuser: 1998, 33)

According to the Parthian text of *Angad Rōšnān I*, 'the Friend of the beings of Light' is a strength / gift bestower and a helper of man among the 'foes and all the ravages of their deceitful bodies.'

Arabic texts

One of the oldest Arabic texts on Manichaeism, surviving more than a century before Ibn al-Nadīm's *al-Fihrist*[1], is *Kitāb al-Radd-i*

[1] The oldest surviving Arabic text on Mani and Manichaeism is, of course, *Tawḥīd al-Mufaḍḍal*, dictated by Imām Ja`far Ṣādiq (d. 148 AH / 770 AD) to Mufaḍḍal Ibn-i `Umar al-Ja`fī; a short fragment in *Kitāb al-Khawās al-Kabīr* by Jābir Ibn-i Ḥayyān (d. 161 AH / 783 AD); *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān,* composed by

'la'l-Zandīq al-La`īn Ibn-i Muqaffa` (*The Book of Refutation against the Damned Zandīq Ibn-i Muqaffa`*) composed by Qāsim Ibn-i Ibrāhīm (d. 246 AH / 848 AD).[1]

Throughout the surviving parts of this book, we see the name of the Beloved of the Lights as 'Ḥabīb al-Anwār' among the great deities such as 'Abu'l 'Aẓimat = the Father of Greatness', '`Umm'l-Ḥayāt al-Mutinassimat / Mutibassimat = the Pleasant / Refreshing or the Smiling / Joyful Mother of Life', and an epithet of the Great Architect's helpers as 'ḥurrās al-khanādiq wa'l-aswār = the guards of the ditches and towers' as follows,

> *alam tarū asmā'ahum allati yusammūna wa mā minhā lāghayrih*[2] *yu`aẓẓimūna faminhā 'indahum Abul-'Aẓimat wa Ummal-Ḥayāt al-Mutinassimat*[3] *wa Ḥabīb al-Anwār wa hurrās al-khanādiq wal-aswār wal-Bashīr wal-Munīr wal-Insān al-Qadīm wa mā dhakarū min al-arākina allatī 'alayhim bihā(bihā 'alayhim) min allāh all'n alla'natuh wa mā qālū min 'Amūd al-Sabḥ*[4] *allati bihim biqawlihim fīhā aqbaḥu mā yustaqbahu wa akdhabu akādhīb al-zawr wa a'jab al-a'ājīb('ajāyib) mā wasafū min al-ẓulmati wal-nūr.*[5]
>
> Do you not see their names which are called, and there is not of these names except those who are honoured, such as Abu'l-`ẓimat (the Father of Greatness), `Umm'l-Ḥayāt al-Mutinassimat / al-Mutibassimat (the Pleasant / Smiling Mother of Life), Habīb

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Jāhiz (d. 255 AH / 877 AD) and some others, but they do not refer to the above mentioned deity.

[1] This book was translated into Italian by Michelangelo Gyuidi (in 54 pp text, 28 pp. intro. and 127 pp. trans.) in Rome in 1927. The translator used four manuscripts signed A, B, C, and D. It is not precisely known that the book is truly a refutation against Ibn-i Muqaff`. See A. Afshār Shīrāzī: 1957, p. 80-81.

[2] In another manuscript signed A in Guidi's edition: la ghayrihā (see *ibid.*).

[3] In manuscript signed D: al-Mutibassimat (see *ibid.*).

[4] In other manuscripts signed as A, C and D: al-Shabḥ (see *ibid.*).

[5] *Ibid.*

> al-Anwār (the Beloved of the Lights) , ḥurrās al-khanādiq wa'l-aswār (the guards of the ditches and towers), al-Bashīr (the Third Messenger, wa'l-Munīr[1] (the Maiden of Light) and al-Insān al-Qadīm (the Primordial Man); and those that have been mentioned of the archons, who would be damned with the worst curses, and what has been told of the 'Amūd al-Sabḥ (the Column of Pray [Glory]), that is, in their words, the ugliest thing which is denounced and is the worst oppressive lie and the most surprising surprise that has been described of light and darkness.

The other section of the fragment refers to Manichaean deities as,

> *fayāwaylahum waylan waylā min aqāwīlihim qīlan qīlā fī Abī 'Aẓimatihim wa Umma Ḥayātihim wa Ḥabīb al-Anwārihim wa Bashīrihim wa Munīrihim wa 'Amūd al-Sabḥihim wa Insānihim wa mā t'abbathū fīhi min arākinihim fa'azzamū minhā ghayri ma'nā wa sammawhā kadhiban bil-asmā' al-husnā.*[2]
>
> Woe to them, Woe! Woe to their sayings, nonsense sayings on the Father of Greatness, the Mother of Life [3], the Beloved of the Lights, the Third Messenger, the Maiden of the Light, the Column of Glory, and the [Primordial] Man, and what they say nonsense of the archons, so they honoured those nonsense names and called Good Names as wicked.

The longest and most authentic Arabic text, however, on Manichaean cosmogony is undoubtedly the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm, which calls the Beloved of the Lights as Ḥabīb al-Anwār:

> *wa itba'ahu malika janān al-nūr bi ilāhati ākhir wastanqadhahu wastazahara 'alal-ẓulmat wa yuqālu lihādhā alladhī itba'a bihil-Insān,*

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[1] In other Arabic texts, the deity is called Ilāhat al-Nayyirūn (the Goddess of the Light-givers). See Bahār-Esmailpour: 2005, 76.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[3] Here without the epithet of *al-mutinassimat/al-mutibassimat*.

Ḥabīb al-Anwār fanuzila wa khalasa al-Insān al-Qadīm min al-jahannamāt mu'ammian akhadha wa asara min arwāḥ il-ẓulmat.[1]

And the King of Paradise of Light sent another God [2] following him (the Primordial Man) and saved him, and conquered against Darkness. And this (deity) who was sent following the (Primordial) Man is called Habīb al-Anwār. He fell down and saved the Primordial Man of hells (pits) and took some parts of the spirits of Darkness, and bound them.

The adjective 'habīb' (beloved) is worthy of note. It mostly denotes the angelic and feminine (divine or earthly) figures, and it is quite the opposite of 'muḥib' (lover).[3] In addition, the *Fihrist* used 'ilāh' (god), not 'ilāha' (goddess) for the other gods such as the Father of Greatness, the Call-God, and sometimes 'malak' (angel) for the other deities.

It is also noteworthy that in other manuscripts of the *Fihrist* used by Flügel and in an Egyptian manuscript published in 1348 AH / 1970 AD as well, we never see 'ilāh' (god) in spite of frequent differences of words and expressions quoted by Flűgel and other scholars. However, it is not known why Flügel has translated 'bi-ilāh'/ 'bi-āliha' as 'god/gods'. Perhaps he had in mind angels without any specific sex.

On the other hand, a Persian translator of the *Fihrist*, the late Prof. M. R. Tajaddod, who annotated another Arabic text, and used

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[1] Flügel: 1971, 152; cf. also D. Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadim* (Tehran 1970), pp. 19, 46: n. 50.

[2] Here the word 'bi-ilāha' can be also read as Goddess. Thus, Prof. M. Abolqāsemī, Iranian scholar and the editor of the Manichaean chapter of the *al-Fihrist*, following Flügel's translation presented the deity as a masculine figure; so he had to change 'bi-ilāa' (goddess) into 'bi-ilāh' (god). See M. Abolqāsemī, *Mānī be Revāyat-e Ibn-i Nadīm* (Tehran 1379/2001), pp. 19, 46: n. 50.

[3] See *Al-Mawrid*, ed. by M. Ba`lbakī (Beirut 1994), pp. 98, 542.

a quantity of authentic manuscripts to translate the *Fihrist* into New Persian, took the deity to be 'elāhe' (goddess):

> *fereshte janān al-nūr elāheye dīgarī rā be donbāl-e `ū ravāne dāsht va `ū rā nejāt dādeh va bar zolmat pīrūz gardānīd va ān ke be donbāl-e Ensān-e Qadīm pā'īn āmad va Ensān-e Qadīm rā az ān dūzakhyān rahā'ī bakhšīd va asīrānī az arvāh-e zolmat gereft, Habīb al-Anwār nām dāšt.*[1]
>
> The angel of the Paradise of Light sent forth another goddess following Him (the Primordial Man) and saved him and conquered Darkness, and the one who came down following the (Primordial) Man and released the Primordial Man of those hell-beings and took captives from the spirits of Darkness, was called Ḥabīb al-Anwār (the Beloved of the Lights).

Syriac texts

One of the most coherent and vital accounts of Manichaean cosmology can be seen in the Syriac anti-Manichaean writings of Theodore bar Konai. It has been suggested that he based his criticism directly on one or two of Mani's original books, *Pragmateia* and *Epistula Fundamenti.*[2]

P. van Lindt raises a thoughtful, but unanswered, question on the function of the Beloved of the Lights. He writes,

> The function of different figures mentioned by Theodore bar Konai remains unclear. An example is the Beloved of the Lights, one of the main evocations of the Father of Greatness. Why does he precede, together with the Great Architect, the key figure of the Living Spirit? Would it not have been more meaningful that the Living Spirit was evoked immediately by the Father of Greatness, just like his pair the

[1] Tajaddod: 1988, 586.

[2] Tardieu (1981, 56) suggests *Pragmateia*, but Cumont and Krugener (1912, 4) suggest *Epistula Fundamenti*. Cf. also Lindt: 2000, 378.

Mother of Life? Is the order coincident or has it a deeper purpose?" (Lindt: 2000, 387)

The answer to the first question will be made clearer in the last part of the paper through analyzing Syriac texts. The fact at hand now, is that Syriac texts on Manichaean cosmological myth allude to two significant figures: the angel Nḥšbṭ (Naḥašbaṭ?), and ḥbyb nhyr' (the Beloved of the Lights), as follows,

1 And he says: then an angel named Naḥašbaṭ came forth to see the Primordial Man, holding the diadem of victory in her hand.
2 And he says: Naḥašbaṭ threw light before the Primordial Man, and as the King of Darkness saw this, he showed reflection and said: What I sought for afar, I found at my hand. Consequently, the Primordial Man gave himself and his Five Sons as well, as 'food' to the King of Darkness.
3. Then in the second evocation, the Father of Greatness evoked the Beloved of the Lights (Syr: *ḥbyb nhyr'*).The Great Architect evoked the Living Spirit (Syr: *rwḥ' ḥy'*).
4. They came into the Realm of Darkness and found that the Primordial Man and his Five Sons had been swallowed by Darkness.[1]

Naḥašbaṭ, as the above quoted Syriac fragment conspicuously demonstrates, is an angel who came to meet the Primordial Man with the Crown of Victory throwing light before him.

So the deity's function would be to guide the Primordial Man (Lieu: 1992, 14) and presumably to light the scene of the battlefield. Naḥašbaṭ, though clearly different from the Beloved of the Lights, may be identical with Maiden (without any specific epithet) praised frequently in some Coptic texts such as *A Manichaean Psalm-Book.*

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[1] Theodore bar Konai, *Liber Scholliorum,* ed. by A. Sher, trans. by R. Hespel, and R. Draguet, xi, pp. 313-14; cf. also R. Haardt, *Gnosis*, tr. by J. Hendry (Leiden 1971), pp. 189f.

Coptic texts

Coptic texts are not silent about the Beloved of the Lights, but one may be confused with different usage of Light, Lights, Maiden, Maiden of the Light, or the Beloved of the Lights.

However, *pe merit n nouaine* (the Beloved of the Lights), referred to many times in Coptic texts (but only six times in *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*), is undoubtedly the same Ḥabīb al-Anwār mentioned in Arabic and Syriac texts and the same Rōšnān Xwārist / Frih Rōšn of the Middle Persian / Parthian fragments. We are also faced with frequent descriptions of the Maiden of Light in *A Manichean Psalm-Book*, who is sometimes identical with the Living Self (a deity made up of the Five Elements) of the First Creation; at other times she is identical with the Maiden of Light of the Third Creation.

The Beloved of the Lights in *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*,

> ...Our father, the First Man of Glory
> Whose victory and garland are blessed,
> The Beloved of the Lights that wears the crown...
> For Salvation...
> The Good One, the Great Builder, the first of the...
> ...to the New Aeon to form it..."
>
> (*Manichaean PsB.* ccxix)

> This is the day of the First Man
> This is the day of the Beloved of the Lights;
> The Holy day is that of the Great Builder
> Who builds the New Aeon.
>
> (*Manichaean PsB.* ccxxxv)

Whenever the Beloved of the Lights is referred to, the 'lights' is first plural, sometimes with the epithet of 'Luminaries' (*Manichaean PsB.* ccxxvii); afterwards he is always recited after

the Primordial Man and before the Great Architect and the Living Spirit.

In one of the Manichaean Psalms (Ps. Ψαλμοί Σαρακωϊώυ?), there is a marvelous description of the deity:

> The Second Emanation
> The Beloved of the Lights
> The Lovable of the Angels
> The giver of garlands to the...
> The Ordainer of everything
> His son that is begot.
> Who is the Great Builder
> The Builder of the New Aeon...
> (Allberry: 1938, 137)

What was confusing for the Coptic writer or scribe, and for Theodore bar Konai as well, was that these might have been three figures confused: the Beloved of the Lights, the Maiden (who is sometimes praised as the Living Self, rather than the Maiden of Light, in *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*), and Naḥašbaṭ the angel.

In the second Coptic fragment quoted above, the composer or the scribe might have been confused about the figure, because the giver of the diadem/garland to the Primordial Man is Naḥašbaṭ of the Syriac texts. The use of the epithet 'Angel' is notable.

The other surprising epithet of the Beloved of the Lights is that he is the 'Ordainer of everything'. The deity bears this significant power because the Father of Greatness resigns after his second direct Emanation, i.e. after the emanation of the Beloved of the Lights he assigns the function of continuing the process of creation to him.

Now we can answer the question brought up by M. van Lindt who asked why the Beloved of the Lights precedes the Great Architect and the key figure of the Living Spirit who is the redeemer of the Primordial Man in the Second Creation. It is

because the Beloved of the Lights, like the Mother of Life, is the Father's 'direct Emanation' and the 'Ordainer of everything' at this stage. So, the Beloved of the Lights 'begets' (according to *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*), or 'evokes' (according to Syriac text) the Great Architect who helps the Living Spirit to end the process of cosmogony in the Second Creation. Here, the Mother of Life and the Primordial Man are comparable with the Beloved of the Lights and the Great Architect.

Naḥašbaṭ of the Syriac text, in my opinion, is the same Maiden (Allberry: 1938, 137, 162) who is identical with the Living Self (made up of the Five Elements) and quite different from the Maiden of Light, a significant goddess of the Third Creation). Both Naḥašbaṭ and the Maiden throw light before the Primordial Man and help him in the Battlefield,[1]

> Maiden equipped with five powers
> That might fight against the five abysses of the Dark.
> (*Manichaean PsB*, ccxxiii)
>
> Or,
>
> His (the Primal Man's) beloved Daughter
> ...of her Father
> Who died for her brethren
> Her brother, the Living Wind...
> (Allberry: 1938, 137)

In Syriac texts, we have both Naḥašbaṭ and Ḥabīb Nehīra whose functions, as mentioned above, are clear to some extent. The obscurity lies with Ḥabīb al-Anwār of the Arabic version. If we suggest Naḥašbaṭ as Maiden 1 (=the Living Self) of *A Manichaean Psalm-Book* rather than the Maiden of Light as Maiden 2, we can

[1] Cf. also Heuser: 1998, 28.

come a pace forward. Ḥabīb al-Anwār, as Ibn al-Nadīm describes in his *al-Fihrist*, has both functions of Naḥašbaṭ / Ḥabīb Nehīra and Maiden 1 / the Living Self, i.e. throwing light before the Primordial Man, and consequently being his helper, and the vital function of being a significant deity as the direct Emanation of the Second Creation, and the second Emanation of the Father of Greatness during the whole process. The problem would become clearer if we consider that Arabic texts lack the figures such as Naḥašbaṭ or the Maiden 1(=the Living Self). Then, Maiden 2 (=Maiden of Light) would be active for the Third Creation.

Considering the attributes of the Beloved of the Lights, including the Most Lovable, the Sweetest, Ḥabīb (beloved, not Muḥib or Lover), Frih (dear, beloved) Light, and Angel (just once in *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*), one can deduce that these qualities are mostly used for angelic or feminine figures. The word 'beloved' could be associated with 'maiden' rather than a male figure in the minds of the composers or scribes, especially in eastern regions.

On the other hand, among the twelve attributes emanated by the Father of Greatness, as Professor Gharib states, "with which they accomplish their cosmic actions", the fifth is 'zeal' which is an endowment of the Beloved of the Lights, who "accepts to go to the enemy camp to help the captives, and shows the way to the Primal man" (Gharib: 2002, 19-20).

The word 'zeal' (Pth: *abrang*; Sgd: *audux*) itself refers to a lovable case; the New Persian equivalent is 'dil' (heart). Therefore, we face similar, and easily confused attributes for them, including the Beloved of the Lights, Maiden 1 (the Living Self), Maiden 2 (=the Maiden of Light), Daughter of the Father. The latter may refer to Naḥašbaṭ, or the Living Self.

Conclusion

As far as the texts show, we have three significant and separate Emanations. The First Emanation is the Mother of Life who forms a triad with the Primordial Man and the Living Self. The Second Emanation is undoubtedly the Beloved of the Lights who forms another triad along with the Great Architect and the Living Spirit. The Third Emanation is the Third Messenger who forms the final cosmological triad of deities with Maiden of Light and Jesus the Splendour. It is notable that the Third Emanation, the Third Messenger (Narisah Yazd in Middle Persian texts) has both feminine and masculine figures (Boyce: 1975, 7). Thus, we can suggest this two-fold character for the Beloved of the Lights too. However, this hypothesis needs deeper examination.

V

Manichaean Gods and Goddesses in *Kitāb al-Radd-i 'la'l-Zandīq al-La'īn Ibn al-Muqaffa'*

One of the oldest Arabic texts[1] on Mani and Manichaeism is a precious treatise named *Kitāb al-Radd-i 'al'l-Zandīq al-La'in Ibn al-Muqaff'(The Book of Refutation against the Damned Zandīq Ibn al-Muqaff')* composed by Qāsim Ibn-i Ibrāhīm (d. 246AH / 868AD).[2]

The treatise survived more than a century before al-Nadīm's *Kitāb al-Fihrist* and was translated into Italian by Michelangelo Gyuidi (in 54 pp. text, 28 pp. introduction, and 127 pp translation) published in Rome in 1927. In his introduction, Gyuidi states that he used four manuscripts of the treatise marked with the signs of A, B, C, and D. It is obvious that the book was composed in the first half of the 9th century AD. However, it is not definitely known that

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[1] The oldest Arabic text on Mani and Manichaeism is, of course, *Tawḥīd al-Mufaḍḍal,* dictated by Imām Ja'far Ṣādiq (d. 148AH / 770 AD) to Mufaḍḍal Ibn al-'Umar al-Ja'fī; a short fragment in *Kitāb al-Khawās al-Kabīr* by Jābir Ibn al-Ḥayyān composed by Jāḥiẓ (d. 255AH / 877 AD) and some others. However, they do not refer to Manichaean deities directly. Cf. *Tawḥīd al-Mufaḍḍal,* narrated by Mufaḍḍal Ibn al-'Umar Ja'fī, Najaf, 1369 AH / 1949 AD, pp. 5-90; Jābir Ibn al-Ḥayyān, *Kitāb al-Khawās al-Kabīr*, ed. Paul Kraus (Cairo, 1354 AH / 1933 AD), pp. 224-332.

[2] M. Gyuidi, *Kitāb al-Radd-i 'al'l-Zadīq al-La'in Ibn al-Muqaff'* (Rome 1927); A. Afshār Shīrāzī, *Mutūn-i Arabi va Fārsi dar bāre-ye Mānī va Mānavīyyat,* appended in S. H. Taqīzādeh, *Mānī va Dīn-i `ū* (Tehran 1957).

the book was really a refutation against Ibn al-Muqaffʿ, or against the whole Manichaean doctrine. Although Ibn al-Muqaffʿ is directly addressed in the title of the treatise and is damned by the composer, it is obvious that the treatise pays attention only to the Manichaean dualistic doctrine of light and darkness which threatened the Islamic society at that time and was mostly refuted by the zealot theologians.

The main theme of the treatise is to refute the *zandīqs* or the dualists, especially a Manichaean sect whose leader was called by the writer Mani al-Zandīq. In the author's words,

> *thumma inna firqatan min al-kafara qādahā iṣyānuhā wa na'aqa naqadhatihā fill-kufra wal-'amā shaytānuha imāmuha al-muqaddam wa sayyidihā al-mu'aẓẓam Mānī al-kāfar mā ni'amallāh al-la'īn alladhī lam yabliq kafara qat billāh al-shayātīn.*[1]
>
> A sect of pagans guided by their rebellion that cried and was influenced by paganism, and the blindness of their Satan who was their first Imam (leader) and their mighty lord, Mani the pagan to whom the God may not keep the damned whose paganism never reached the god of the devils.

The author then refers to Mani's doctrine of two contradicted elements of light and darkness,

> *faza'ama annal-ashyā'a kullihā shay'an wa qad yūjadu khilāfu za'imihi bil-'iyān. falā tūjida bayna mā dhukara min al-nūri wal-ẓulmat firqatan illā wujidat al-ashyā'u kullihā bimithlihi lahā mufāriqatun illā anna al-firqatan bayn al-ashyā'i owjida wa min al-ashyā' lilnūr wa ẓulmat.*[2]

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[1] Guidi: 1927, 4; Afshar Shirazi: 1957, 77.
[2] *Ibid.*

> Then he supposed that all things consist of two substances but the opposite side of his supposition is clearly true; and there is no difference (or separation) between the mentioned light and darkness unless there were a separation among the whole things like those two [substances] except the separation among things is clearer and there are things among them that emphasize the darkness.

The dispute on the doctrine of dualism continues throughout the treatise in order to prove its falsehood. Sometimes the author quotes indirectly from Manichaean writings:

> 1. *thumma qāla tahakkimā waftarā za'amā anna al-ashyā'a kullihā min al-nūr wal-ẓulmat mizājun wa annahu lam yakun baynahumā fī mā khalā min dahrihimā imtizājun.*[1]
>
> Then he (Mani) said domineeringly and accuses suspiciously that all things are mixed with light and darkness, and that there has not been any mixture between them for a long time.
>
> 2. *wa qāla fi awlāhimā lam yamtazijā thumma qāla ukhrāhumā imtazajā fajama'ahumā 'indahu fil-imtizāj.*[2]
>
> And [Mani] said [that] they (light and darkness) were not first mixed. Finally it was ordered to be mixed together and to be gathered in amalgamation.
>
> 3. *faqāla bil-nūru wal-ẓulmatu mizājāni wa min var'ihimā falahumā aslān. hal yūjid min dhālika lahum illā mā yūjadu liman·khālafahum.*[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] Gyuidi: 1927, 5; Afshar Shirazi: 1957, 78.
[3] *Ibid.*

Then he said [that] light and darkness are mixed together and beyond them, there are two principles for them. In this case, do they find anything except for their opposites?

4. *thumma yuqālu lahum ayḍan ḥaddithūnā 'an nūr al-shamsi wa mā yubāshiru abṣār al-mubṣirīn minha 'inda shurūqihi bil-lamsi....*[1]

Then, it is told about sun's light and what the beholders watch while [it is] shining concretely... .

5. *wa za'amū annal-shay'a lā yakūna minha abadan illā mithli jawharihi mujtami'an wa mufradan. wa sha'n al-nūr al-'luw wal-irtifāu wa sh'n al-ẓulmati al-sufūl wal-itḍā' wa kadhalik sha'nu kulli ḍiddayn matā wujiddan mutaḍāddayn matā 'alā hādhā hawā hādhā fahuwa abadan yahwi eddhā ḍidduhu samā wa yusammū idhā ḍidduhu hawā. wa fī firāq al-shay'. lisha'nihi ḥaqīqatun fanā'ihi wa buṭlānihi kal-nāri allatī min sha'nihā al-taskhīnu wallīnu alladhī lāyakūu illā walahu talīyīnu qamtay baṭalat sha'nuhumā baṭalat labuda 'aynahumā liannahu lāḥāra illā muskhkhinun wa lālīn abadan alumalīn.*[2]

And they supposed that nothing of it does create eternally except it is convened and individual; the dignity of light is mighty and sublime; and the dignity of darkness is inferior and longing for lowness. And also the dignity of both opposite things, whenever they are found, and as far as they stand in this nature, when he ascends, the [other] descends, he always descends if its opposite comes up. And everything that is separated from its real dignity will be destroyed, such as fire of which the characteristics are heating and softening; for there is never fire except with its softening [nature]. Whenever these two characteristics run away from it, its essence will be false. Why? Because there is no heat

[1] Gyuidi: 1927, 5; Afshar Shirazi: 1957, 78-79.
[2] Gyuidi: 1927, 52; Afshar Shirazi: 1957, 82.

unless there is a heater and there is no softness unless there is a thing that softens.

6. *wa qad za'amū annal-nūr qad zāla 'an dārihi min al-'ulā wa ṣāra ilā hādhihil-arḍ al-suflā wa fī dhālik min taghyīrihi mā qad qīla min buṭlān 'aynihi wa kadhālik al-ẓulmatu fī buṭlānuhā idhā ṣārat ilā khilāfa sh'nuha faṣārat fī manzilihā suflā ilal-irtifā` wa mu'talā fahumā fīqawlihim qad baṭulā....*[1]

They said that light is separated from its lofty abode and has descended to its inferior, earth, and in this transformation, it was said that its essence has lost its substance; and such is darkness in its falsehood if it is opposing its dignity, then it turns into its inferior position, and such is darkness in losing its dignity. Then, according to their (Manichaeans') saying, they [light and darkness] will be false....

Towards the final pages of the manuscript (Gyuidi: 1927, 52-54), the author refers to eight Manichaean deities. Here the author reveals his enmity and orthodox attitude. For he criticizes the Manichaeans obscenely. He writes,

f*awaylun lahum mimmā katabata aydīhim wa waylun lahum mimmā yaksibūn [al-Qur'ān al-karīm, sūrat al-baqara, āyat 83] wa biayy mutala'abi qātalahum allāha yatal'abūn. alam tarū asmā'ahum allati yusmmūna wa mā minhā lāghayrih (lāghayriha) yu`aẓẓimūna faminhā 'indahum Abul-'Aẓimati wa Ummal-Ḥayāt al-Mutinassimati* [2] *wa Ḥabīb al-Anwāri wa hurrās al-khanādiq wal-aswāri wal-Bashīr wal-Munīr wal-Insān al-Qadīm wa mā dhakarū min al-arākina allatī 'alayhim bihā (bihā 'alayhim) min allāh all'n alla'natuh wa mā qālū min 'Amūd al-Sabḥ allati bihim biqawlihim fīhā aqbaḥu mā*

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] In manuscript signed D: al-Mutibassimat (see *ibid.*).

yustaqbahu wa akdhabu akādhīb al-zawr wa a'jabu a'ājīb ('ajāyib) mā wasafū min al-ẓulmati wal-nūr.[1]

Vow to them on account of what they have written, vow to them on account of what they do. In which playground are they playing? May God kill them! Do you not see the names to which they are called, and there are not among these names except those who are revered including *Abu'l-'Aẓimat* (the Father of Greatness), *'Umm'l-Ḥayāt al-Mutinassimat / al-Mutibassimat* (the Pleasant / Smiling Mother of Life), *Ḥabīb al-Anwār* (the Beloved of the Lights), *ḥurrās al-khanādiq wa'l-aswār* (the guards of the ditches and towers), *al-Bashīr* (the Third Messenger), *wa'l-Munīr* (the Maiden of Light) and *al-Insān al-Qadīm* (the Primordial Man); and what have been mentioned of the archons, who would be damned with the worst curses, and what have been told of the *'Amūd al-Sabḥ* (the Column of Prayer [Glory]) that in their word, it is the filthiest thing which is dishonoured and is the most deceitful cruel deceits and the most surprising which are described of light and darkness.

Again, the gods and goddesses are mentioned at the end of the treatise, this time without stating the 'guards of the ditches and towers' and blaming the Manichaeans for their dishonest deed of mixing the holy names with filthiness and falsehood.[2]

So we are faced with seven deities in *Kitāb al-Rad*, including the following (respectively according to their ranks and positions in the three phases of Manichaean cosmogony).

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *fayāwaylahum waylan waylā min aqāwīlahim qīlan qīlān fī Abī 'Aẓimatihim wa Umma Ḥayātihim wa Ḥabīb al-Anwārihim wa Bashīrihim wa Munīrihim wa 'Amūd al-Sabḥihim wa Insānihim wa mā t'abbathū fīhi min arākinihim fa'azzamū minhā ghayri ma'nā wa sammawhā kadhiban bil-asmā' al-husnā.* Cf. Gyuidi: 1927, 53; Afshar Shirazi: 1957, 82-83.

The Golden Age (before the First Creation)

1. **Abu'l 'Aẓimat = the Father of Greatness.** The greatest god of the Manichaean pantheon. He is beyond the material world and lives in the Paradise of Light. In the *Fihrist* of al-Nadīm, he is called *Malik-i Janān al-Nūr* (the King of the Light Paradise). (Flügel: 1925, 328, 329) The name in *Kitāb al-Rad* appears to be translated from Syriac texts with the equivalent name as *'b' drbwt'*, (bar Konai: 1981, 313), while al-Nadīm apparently quotes the term directly from Middle Persian texts *whyšt'w šhry'r* 'the King of Paradise' (Boyce: 1975, 8). It is confirmed in *al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (Shahristāni: 1972, 192; Abolqāsemī: 2004, 45-46, 145-146) as *Malik al-Nūr* or *Malik al-'Ālam al-Nūr* whose New Persian equivalent is Shahryār-e Nūr (the King of Light) or *Shahryār-e Behesht-e Rowshanī* (the King of Light Paradise). However the deity is called Bonus Pater in Latin sources, and *pydr wzwrgyft* (the Father of Greatness) in Parthian texts. (Bahār-Esmailpour: 2005, 72)

The First Creation: The Period of Mixing of Light and Darkness

2. **'Umm'l-Ḥayāt al-Mutinassimat = the Pleasant Mother of Life.** A goddess and the mother of the whole life who is considered as the most important deity of the First Creation or the first phase of cosmological periods. Her original Syriac name is *'ma' dhy'* 'the Mother of the World'. (bar Konai: 1981, 313) The Arabic equivalent is *'Umm'l-Ḥayāt*. Our text appears to present another unique epithet for the goddess, that is, al-Mutibassimat

(Smiling).[1] (Flügel: 1925, 329) Her other names are: Mp. *m'dr y zyndg'n / zyndg'n m'dr*; Pth. *m'd zywndg / 'rd'w'n m'd* 'the Mother of the Righteous ones' / *m'd rwšn* 'the Mother of the Light' / *xwšyzg* 'Sweet, Pleasant' / *'whrmyzdbg m'd* 'the Mother of the Primordial Man'. (Bahār and Esmailpour: 2005, 72) The other epithet of the goddess in Middle Persian fragments M 981, M 991, and M 7980-84, is *srygrqyrb qyrdg'r* 'the Female-Body Deity'. (Boyce: 1975, 63, St. 8, 67, St. 21) She is the first evocation of the Father of Greatness to oppose the invasion of Darkness. The Mother of Life evokes the Primordial Man who is the third deity mentioned in the treatise.

3. **Al-Insān al-Qadīm = the Primordial Man.** His original Syriac name is *'nš' qdmy'* 'the Primordial Man' (bar Konai: 1981, 314), who is the symbol of man descended into the material world and the process of his release is the redemption of man's descended soul. His other names are: Mp. *'whrmyzdby* 'God Ohrmyzd', *n'zwgz'dg* 'the Son of Graceful'; Pth. *'whrmyzdbγ*, *mrd hsyng* 'the Eternal Man', *mrdwhm nxwyn* 'the First Man' and Primus Homo in Latin texts. (Bahār-Esmailpour: 2005, 72) The imprisonment of the Primordial Man is the symbol of the Fall of Light in the material world.

The Second Creation
(The Period of Release of Light and the Creation of the Material World)

4. **Ḥabīb al-Anwār = the Beloved of the Lights.** The deity's original Syriac name is *ḥbyb nhyr'* (bar Konai: 1981, 314)

[1] The other manuscript (with the sign of D) which M. Gyuidi used in his edition of *Kitāb al-Rad* mentions 'al-Mutibassimat' (smiling) which appears for the first time for the deity. See Afshār Shīrāzī: 1957, 82; Flügel: 1925, 3329.

whose function is Manichaean cosmogony is not precisely known, but according to *Kitāb al-Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm, he is a pioneer who was instrumental in loosening the Primordial Man from the chains of Darkness (Lieu: 1992, 15). Al-Nadīm writes,

> *wa atba'ahu malika janān al-nūr bi ilāhati ākhar wastanqadhahu wastazhara 'alal-ẓulmati wa yuqālu lihādhā alladhī ittaba'a bihil-Insān, Ḥabīb al-Anwār fanuzila wa khalasa al-Insān al-Qadīm min al-jahannamāt mu'ammian akhadha wa asara min arwāḥ al-ẓulmati.*[1]
>
> And the King of Paradise of Light sent another deity following him (the Primordial Man), saved him and conquered against Darkness. And that he who came down following the [Primordial] Man and saved the Primordial Man from the hells (pits) and took some [parts] of the spirits of the Darkness as prisoners, was called Ḥabīb al-Anwār (the Beloved of the Lights).

It is notable that the Persian translator of *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, Mohammad Reza Tajaddod, read the word 'bi-ilāha' as 'goddess'[2], but Flügel (1925, 329) took it as a 'god' and Mohsen Abolghasemi (2001, 46) changed the word to 'bi-āliha' and took it as a 'god' too. The deity's function would be clearer if we compare different Coptic, Syriac, Middle Persian, Parthian and Arabic texts. However, the deity is one of the direct emanations of the Father of Greatness and has an important role in the second phase of creation. It will not be

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[1] Flügel: 1871, 152.

[2] *ferešte janān al-nūr elāheye dīgarī rā be donbāl-e `ū ravāne dāšt va `ū rā nejāt dādeh va bar zolmat pīrūz gardānīd va ān ke be donbāl-e Ensān-e Qadīm pā'īn āmad va Ensān-e Qadīm rā az ān dūzakhyān rahā'ī bakhšīd va asīrānī az arvāh-e zolmat gereft, Habīb al-Anwār nām dāšt.* (Tajaddod: 1988, 586)

precisely known unless some new original Syriac, Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, Uigurian, or Chinese materials are discovered. The other names of the deity are: Mp. *rwšn'n xw'ryst* (the sweetest of the Lights); Pth. *fryh rwšn* (the Friend of Light / the Beloved Light). (Boyce: 1975, 9)

The Third Creation (The Salvation of Man)

5. **Al-Bashīr (the Messenger) = the Third Messenger.** His original name in Syriac is *'yzgd'* (bar Konai: 1981, 316), who is the first deity of the Third Creation. His other names are: Mp. *nrysh yzd* (God Narisah) / *rwšnšhr yzd* (the God of the Realm of Light); Pth. *nrysf yzd* (God Narisaf / *myhr yzd* (God Mihr, of course different from *myhryzd*, the Living Spirit, an important and key figure of the Second Creation who rescues the Primordial Man and creates the material world) / *rwšnšhr yzd* (the God of Light Realm) / *zyn'rys bg* (God Zēnārēs); and Lt. Tertius Legatus. (Bahār-Esmailpour: 2005, 73) He commands the Great Architect to make New Paradise (a temporary paradise which lasts until the end of the material world and it is the place for the released light particles and spirits). The Third Messenger reveals both his masculine and feminine figures to tempt the archons chained in the sky. (Esmailpour: 2004, 113)

6. **Al-Munīr (the Shining One) = the Maiden of Light.** Her Original Syriac name is *btwlt nhwr' / trt'sr' btwlt'* (Twelve Maidens) (bar Konai: 1981, 316); each of her twelve manifestations refers to a sign of the zodiac (Lieu: 1992, 18); her other names are: Mp. & Pth. *knygrwšn*; Mp. *sdwys* (Sadwēs). She also tempts the male archons

chained above the sky and leads them to ejaculate and drop down the swallowed light particles. Al-Munīr's other Arabic name is *Ilāhat al-Nayyirūn* = the Goddess of the Lights. (Bahār-Esmailpour: 2005, 73) Finally, both al-Bashīr and al-Munīr cause the archons to release the light particles during the redeeming process of creation.

7. **'Mūd al-Sabḥ = the Column of Pray [Glory].** The deity's Syriac name is *'stn šbḥ'* (Ephraim: 1921, 208). His other names are: Mp. *šrws 'hr'y*; Pth. *β'mstwn / kyšwrw'r yzd* (Bahār-Esmailpour: 2005, 73), also *β'mstwn* in Sogdian texts (Gharib: 2004: 97). The deity's visible appearance is the Milky Way. According to the releasing process of the Third Creation, "when three wheels are set in motion by the Third Messenger, the light particles or souls are drawn up, refined and made sublime and at the same time conveyed along the Milky Way from the moon to the sun." (Lieu: 1998: 20) In the *Kitāb al-Fihrist* we read,

> *thumma khalaqa al-shams wal-qamar yastaṣfā al-nūr ikhtalaṭa bil-shayāṭīn al-bard fī 'Amūd al-Sabḥ yataṣā'ad dhāliku ma'ammian yartafi'u min al-tasābī wal-taqādīs wal-kalām al-ṭayyib wa `a'mālil-barr.*[1]
>
> Then, he created the sun and the moon to refine the light of this world. Again, the sun refines the light mixed with the archons of warmth, and the moon [refines] the light mixed with the archons of cold; that [light] ascends to the Column of Pray [Glory] and together with the other prayers, the sacredness, good speech, and fine deeds will go up [to heaven].

[1] Flügel: 1925, 330.

Included with the above mentioned deities, *Kitāb al-Rad* refers to *ḥurrās al-khānadiq wa'l-aswār* (the guards of the ditches and towers) which is evidently related with another god of the Second Creation, the Great Architect whose original name in Syriac is *bn rb'*. (bar Konai: 1981: 314). His other names are: Mp. *r'z 'y wzwrg* (the Great Builder), *nwgšhr'fwryzd* (the New Realm-Maker God); Pth. *β'myzd* (the Light God); and Ar. *Bannā al-Kabīr* (the Great Builder) (Bahār-Esmailpour: 2005, 72).

It seems that *Kitāb al-Rad* refers only to the deity's heavenly comrades who help him guard the ditches and towers made by him after the process of making the material world. However, there is a Middle Persian fragment which directly refers to the function of the Great Architect in cosmological process:

> And *Rāz-i Wuzurg* (the Great Builder) filled in and leveled those five ditches to create New Paradise, and in the same way, he piled up and cast down the firmaments upon four layers of the earth, dark, dry, and black, firing and watery, one upon the other.[1]

Conclusion

A survey of the deities mentioned in *Kitāb al-Rad* shows that although the author wishes to refute Manichaean dualistic doctrine, especially its cosmology, and to reveal the falsehood of its divinities, he cites indirectly and sometimes directly from Manichaean texts. Since the treatise was compiled in the middle of the 9th century AD, and Manichaeans were still living in Iran and Mesopotamia at that time, the author could still use some original Manichaean sources in Arabic and presumably in Syriac which are

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[1] *`wd r'z 'y wzrg, whyšt 'y nwg, `br 'pwrydn r'y, h'n pnz knd'r 'y mrg hngnd `wd h'mgyn qyrd. `wd hmbdyc `sm'n'n `br t'r zmyg nyr'myšn ch'r, hwš'gyn 'wd t'ryn 'dwryn 'wd 'byn, yq 'br dwdy ncyd 'wd nyr'pt.* (Boyce: 1957, 61; Esmailpour: 2004, 132-133)

paralleled with original Middle Persian and Parthian Turfan texts. New findings of this paper consist of two epithets of *al-Mutinassimat* (Pleasant) and *al-Mutibassimat* (Smiling) for the Mother of Life, the significant figure of the First Creation in Manichaean cosmology. The Persian equivalents of the two epithets are *š'dgr* and *xnd'n,* which are not found as the deity's epithets throughout the Middle Persian and Parthian texts discovered so far. In addition, referring to the comrades of the Great Architect as *ḥurrās al-khanādiq wa'l-aswār* (the guards of the ditches and towers / fortifications) is a new theme which needs further consideration with regard to determining the deity's function.

Abolqasem Esmailpour, Manichaean Gnosis & Creation Myth
Sino-Platonic Papers, 156 (July, 2005)

VI

Rūmī's Prologue to the *Mathnawī* and Gnostic Hymns: A Comparative Analysis

Introduction

The prologue to the *Mathnawī* is indeed the epigraph and the manifesto of Iranian-Islamic mysticism, wherein one of the most fundamental mystical themes, that is, the isolation and straying of the human spirit and the fall of the spirit from the heavens down to this earthly world, has been discussed. The separation and isolation of man from his material form has been an obsession of the ascetics. We find its climax in the mysticism of Mowlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Mohammad Balkhī, better known as Rūmi. Here, we shall try to make a comparative analysis of the prologue of the *Mathnawī* and the Gnostic hymns. After surveying the main motifs in the prologue and in the most famous Gnostic hymns, it can be argued that Islamic mystical themes have deep roots in Christian and Manichaean gnosis during the early centuries of the Christian era. The mystic idea of the fall of man from his transcendental dwelling is, at one extreme, comparable with the fall of light from the Paradise of Light in Manichaeism, and in the other extreme, with

the fall and absurdity of human spirit in Christian Gnostic schools of the third to fifth centuries.

The main themes of pre-Islamic gnostic hymns such as in *A Manichaean Psalm-Book* and other Middle Persian and Parthian hymns are analysed here. The themes have been compared with the content of the prologue of the *Mathnawī*. In the final analysis, there have been common features between Gnostic-mystical themes of early Christianity and Muslim mystical works and thoughts, which show the continuity of the mystical tradition in the broad realm of Christianity, Manichaeism and Islam.

The foremost interpreters of the *Mathnawī* have interpreted the reed flute as follows:

> The reed flute applies to the Holy Spirit and the rational soul, which has been isolated from its world and has been held captive in the prison of the body. It is wailing now in its longing for the return to its world and lamenting over its suffering, isolation and imprisonment. Therefore, in the last couplet, *nayistān* (reed bed) must be the world of incorporeal beings or the station of immutable essences.[1]

Later, 'Abdal-Raḥmān Jāmī, and the subsequent interpreters of the *Mathnawī*, considered *nayistān* the first invisible spirit or the first ordained being and / or the second invisible spirit or the second ordained being, and took man and woman as manifestations of the Divine Attributes and possible beings, or intellects and spirits. According to Professor Furūzānfar, this is a mistaken interpretation of and a far cry from the speech of Rūmī.[2] Furūzānfar considered the reed flute as an allegory of Rūmī himself, who lost his being and ego and was overtaken by love and the Beloved. Be that as it may, whether we hold the 'reed flute' to

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[1] B. Furūzānfar, *Sharḥ-e Mathnawī-e Sharīf (The Interpretation of the Intellectual Mathnawī)* (Tehran 1992), vol. 1, p. 8.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

be Rūmī himself or to be the Spirit, it is an essence which has been isolated from its source, that is, the reed bed, and dwells in a state of fusion and burning. Rūmī too seemed to be suffering from being isolated from his eternal and celestial Beloved. His *Mathnawī* describes this state of affairs.

While commenting on the introduction to the *Mathnawī*, Jāmī composed several couplets that described the attributes and archetypes that manifested and burgeoned in man who, nevertheless, lives in captivity:

> In the reed bed wherein each nothingness
> Had the colour of unity with pre-eternity
> Since all names and essences impeccable
> Are manifested in man
> Everybody is wailing
> Each thing is separate from its essence
> The love of nation seized them
> This was the cry of men and women.[1]

Comparative Analysis

What we intend to establish here is the point that the subject of isolation or imprisonment of the spirit within the confines of the body, is not new to Islamic mysticism. The perspective of the captivity of the soul and the imprisonment of the body was first discussed by the Gnostics or mystics in early Christian times and verily constitutes the cornerstone of Gnostic thought. The theme of the fall and captivity of the soul on earth was discussed by the Gnostics of the second and third centuries of the Christian era.

The heretic mystics of the early Christian era were divided into a number of categories. The foremost Christian Gnostic was Simon the Magus, who believed Helena to be the last and lowest incarnation of the spirit isolated from the transcendental world. He

[1] *The Interpretation of Valī Muḥammad Akbarābādī*, quoted from *ibid.*, p. 10.

held that the salvation in the Hereafter would take place simultaneously with the ultimate salvation of the fallen spirit. He also held salvation to be within the temporal order, whereas other Gnostics conceived salvation as attainable only by escaping their earthly prison.With regard to his own fall from the upper world and his passage through the celestial zones, which swelled with mischief and matter, he said:

> I took on a new form in every firmament similar to the form of the creatures of that firmament, so as to hide myself from the eyes of the ruling angels and to descend near Ennuia, called the Holy Spirit, the one through whom I created the angels, and they created the material world and mankind.[1]

Marcion, the heretic gnostic of the early Christian era, headed another movement. He believed that God bore no intrinsic relation to the created universe at all; he also believed that the soul bore no relation to God. Unlike other gnostics, he did not consider the soul to be alien, or corrupted, to this world and held that our souls belonged to this world.

The third approach of the gnostic doctrine is found in the school of Hermes of Egypt. Hermetic writings, such as the treatise of *Poimandres*, have pointed to the basic difference between the soul and the body and are an indication of the profound gnostic thought. Furthermore, it has been stated in this treatise that "at the beginning there was a light in the whole universe, peaceful and pleasing; later on, darkness appeared at the bottom, which was very horrifying, despicable and intertwined like a snake."[2]

In Muslim literature, Hermes has been identified sometimes with Enoch, one of the prophets of the Children of Israel, and sometimes with the Prophet Idris. He has also been presumed to be

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[1] H. Jonas, *Gnostic Religion* (Boston 1970), p. 45.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

the prophet of the Sabeans. A number of works with a tinge of Gnosticism have been ascribed to him. The instances of meeting an angel or a celestial instructor, analogous to the symbolic tales of Avecinna and Suhrawardī, can be found in the works of Enoch. Therefore, unlike the prophetic teachings, the teachings and philosophy of this school came in vogue among Shi'ite Muslims, who accepted and welcomed them. From the second century AH / eighth century AD, the Hermetic literature spread over the entire Muslim world from two main seats, Baghdad and Ḥarran. By the time thinkers like Avecinna, Ibn-i Tufail, Suhrawardī and Ibn-i 'Arabī emerged, the hermetic doctrines had already taken root. There are indications that these Muslim thinkers derived their ideas from those hermetic doctrines.[1]

The Hermetic ideas exercised a great influence on Muslim mysticism. The term 'universal man' frequently mentioned in the works of the mystics is found for the first time in one of the Hermetic works, *The Psalm of Na'assene*. The correlation between the 'First Man' of this world and the Primordial Man is of paramount importance in mysticism.[2]

The fourth approach in the Gnostic doctrine is the school of Valentinus, which has been called the Syro-Egyptian Gnostic school as well. Valentinus believed in an eternal being; when the universe was in a deep state Sophia came into being. Sophia was the latest creation and, by virtue of her eternity, she was isolated from all others. She was so isolated from the eternal essence that

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[1] T. Pūrnāmdārīyān, *Ramz va Dāstānhā-ye Ramzī dar Adab-e Fārsī* (*Symbols and Symbolic Tales in Persian Literature*) (Tehran 1989), p. 258; see also S. H. Nasr, "Hermes and Hermetic Writings in the Muslim World" in the *Journal of Faculty of Literature and Humanities* (Tehran University), vol. 10, issue 2, p. 156; also see A. E. Afīfī, "The Influence if Hermetic Literature on Muslim Thought", *BSOAS*, vol. xiii (London 1960), p. 844; cf. S. Holroyd, *The Elements of Gnosticism*, M.A. Dorset (Victoria 1977), pp. 76-80.

[2] R. Nicholson, *Sufism and the Relation between Man and God* (Tehran 1995), P. 183.

she eventually descended into debauchery and madness. She then embarked upon her liberation and underwent horrid agonies. Later the intellect emerged and liberated Sophia from debauchery and sent her back to the upper world. Thus, according to the gnostics of this school, all the souls that have fallen captive to this world and have become slaves to debauchery, can be liberated and attain perfection through mastering gnostic wisdom.[1]

The last Gnostic approach is the Manichaean asceticism, which took shape during the third century AD, and which exercised a tremendous impact on gnostic movements. Mani, in fact, developed the mystical tendencies preceding him, but strove to change these mystical tendencies into a broad religion. According to Mani's ideas, the human soul is an invisible light which ought to pass through the gate of eternal life. Man presently lives in a time of light and darkness. Redemption is attained when man becomes aware of this fact and redeems his soul or light incarcerated within him. On the other hand, the human soul, being captive in matter, can only attain redemption when it becomes aware of its rightful position, and especially of the fact that its abode is in that world, the realm of light. The material forces always chant to the soul and urge it to sink into a sleep of intoxication (oblivion).

There are thus varying approaches in the gnostic school, but all of them can be categorized broadly into two main systems, the Iranian gnostic system and the Syro-Egyptian gnostic system. In both of these systems, the mystical principles are the same, viz. the gap and isolation noticed between the Transcendent God and the universe, the difference between the universe and man, and most important of all, the duality of the soul and body. But the real difference between these two systems lies in the manner of all and destruction of the soul or light:

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[1] See *Gnosticism and Manichaeism*, ed. & tr. by Esmailpour, (Tehran 1994), p. 35; also see M. Bahār and Esmailpour, *Manichaean Literature* (Tehran 2005), pp. 50-54.

In the Iranian category, which is under the impact of the Iranian transcendental duality, and especially that of Zoroastrianism, the matter did not derive its source from the real light nor from the divine spirit. According to this school, the matter, being unclean and dark, has a non-divine source whereas the soul is clean and pure. It is important to keep in mind that, according to this school, the emergence of the material world lies in neither the abnormal result of the divine light and grace nor in the result of its isolation from God, but it has been manifested as a result of the battle between the matter, i.e. evil and darkness, and the soul, i.e. grace and light. Because of this battle, these opposite poles mingle together and the soul becomes a captive of the matter, and at last attains liberation and returns to its origin, from which it had been separated.[1]

The antagonism between soul and body or the battle between intellect and spirit can be seen explicitly in the poetry of Rūmī:

The soul in its separation from the throne like a she-camel
The body from its love of the thorn
The soul takes wings towards heaven above
The body claws at the earth
O You who have died for your country, as long as you are with me
My soul shall be far from Leilī.[2]

In these couplets, Rūmī has likened the tug of the war between soul and body or the battle between form and meaning and / or the antagonism between intellect and spirit to the antagonism of Majnūn with the she-camel.[3] The squabble between soul and body

[1] M. Bahār and Esmailpour, *op. cit*, p. 42.
[2] J. M. Mowlawī, *Kulliyāte Mathnawī-e Ma'nawī:* with the introduction of B. Furūzānfar (Tehran 1354 AH / 1974 AD), p. 615.
[3] See J. Sattārī, *Hālāt-e 'Eshq-e Majnūn (The Aspects of Majnūn's Love)* (Tehran 1987), p. 283.

and between intellect, and spirit or the dispute between love and intellect and form and meaning conjures up the duality of the gnostics who believe in the eternal and everlasting separation of the world of light and darkness or of spirit and matter. Of course, this analogy does not suggest that the mystics accepted the fundamentals of Gnostic-Manichaean thought, but it conjures up a kind of dialectic, which is observed in most cultures, *inter alia*, in Iranian culture.

On the other hand, in the Syrian school, the two roots of existence are considered to be related to a single divine principle, and all of existence, i.e. the inferior material world and the immaterial world, has been ascribed to a single source. The issue of the fall and destruction of the soul is related to the ignorance of the soul which, separated from its eternal and celestial source, recedes into inferiority and oblivion.

Now let us see what the prologue to the *Mathnawī* with its special perspective, which is the main vignette of Sufis and ascetics of the thirteenth century AD and the preceding phases, has in common with the gnostic poetry of the initial phases. As pointed out earlier, the motif of separation, from the paradisal *nayistān* (reed bed), and the longing for union are among the important perspectives of this *Prologue*:

> Everyone who is left far from his source
> Wishes back the time when he was united with it.

This longing for union with the celestial source can be seen among the followers of the above two Gnostic systems. *Inter alia*, in one of the hymns of Mani (*hymn 261*) it is said:

> I will pass up into the skies
> And leave this body upon the earth
> The trumpet sounds, I hear
> They are calling me up to the immortals

I will cast away my body upon the earth
From which it was assembled.[1]

The gnostics of the early Christian era, including Mani, whose mystical ideas had a more profound impact on the Sufis than the impact of his religious system on the Muslim society, considered this world as a vast prison and an arena of evil and Ahriman, wherein man has become incarcerated like a bird and lives in a state of anguish. According to Manichaean mythology, the perimeters of this earthen sphere are encircled by numerous firmaments similar to concentric globes. The most important among them are the seven firmaments of planets on top of which is the firmament of the fixed stars or the eighth firmament. All these firmaments serve as barriers between man on earth and the fixed and enduring celestial world. Man lives in a state of deep isolation, and it is this isolation that makes man miserable:

But whoever is parted from one who speaks his language
Becomes dumb, though he has a hundred songs.

The soul and spirit of man are incarcerated within the body just like the caged bird. The gnostics, particularly the Stoics, called this part incarcerated in the body 'Pneuma' or the 'Etheric Fiery Being', or the Universal / Divine Soul. This soul or Pneuma is a quotient of the sacred divine being, which has been separated from the kingdom of God and has fallen down to this material world; therefore, its isolation is saddening and biting, as Rūmī says:

Since every limb seeks separation
The dear soul will be within separation
It says, 'O low earthly limbs
My nostalgia is bitterer

[1] C. R. C. Allberry, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book* (Stuttgart 1938), p. 191.

I belong to the heaven above.'
The willingness of the soul is for the inspiration
The soul of the place is His essence.[1]

This theme can be observed in a better and beautiful form in one of the famous couplets in the prologue to the *Mathnawī*:

I want a bosom torn by severance,
That I may unfold (to such a one) the pain of live desire.

In the Manichaean hymns, *Angad Rōšnān (The Perfect Lights)*, too, this theme is presented in a different way:

The soul replied: I am the delicate-born of the Father of Greatness
I am mingled with this material world and suffer
Take me out of the arms of death (the low world)[2]

And concerning the redemption of the Living Self it says:

O bright Self (soul and spirit) farewell
Go back to your own place
O happy force, O the elected greatness![3]

In the above hymn-cycle, as well as in *Huyadagmān (Good Luck for Us)*, sung by a great Manichaean gnostic, Mar Wahman Xwarxšed, there are numerous songs regarding the captivity of the soul, the incarcerated man and his redemption. These gnostic hymns are originally composed in Parthian language during the third and fourth centuries AD, that is, during the flourishing period of the Gnostic religion at the beginning of Christianity:

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[1] J. M. Mowlawī, *The Mathnawī* (Tehran 1974), p. 616.
[2] M. Boyce, *Reader* (Leiden-Téhéran-Liège 1975), p. 108, text *ay*; Jes P. Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature* (Delmar 1974), p. 48.
[3] M. Boyce, *op. cit.*, p. 106, text *av*.

I cry upon the soul
Perchance I may attain salvation
From the flocks and predators
Which devour each other. [1]

Or:

O Soul, come and never fear
Death has fallen
Illness has dissipiated
O Soul! Come thee, come up!
Wishes are difficult to achieve
All are doomed to destruction
And the sorrow of death
And you have been separated from your place.[2]

Or:

The guest of light
The incarcerated man
Has stepped into a calm state![3]

Let us now compare these rhymes with the speech of Rūmī:

We belong to heaven above and go upwards
We belong to the sea and go to the sea
We do not belong here or there
Our star is not in the galaxy
We shall go to Pleiades
Do not obstruct the path
We shall go to the mount of Caucasus.[1]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 163, text *ow*.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 166, text *cz*.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 176, text *dgs*.

The theme of crossing the earth and reaching the empyrean and the abode of the Omnipresent has been given in most of *Manichaean Psalms*. The inferiority and the misery of this world and the futility of affection hereto is the prevailing trend of these hymns, which was uttered by the Manichaean ascetics two or three centuries before Islam:

> This lion that is within me I have strangled
> I have turned him away from my soul
> Him who pollutes me at all times.[2]
>
> I will pass through the skies
> And leave this body upon the earth
> The trumpet sounds, I hear
> They are calling me up to the Immortals
> I will cast away my body upon the earth
> From which I was assembled.[3]
>
> The days of thy life are running from thee;
> Why dost thou vainly waste thy zeal
> On the wings of the earth
> And puttest behind thee all the [things of evil]?
> Thou hast spent thy life sunk in the worries and cares of the world
> Working thyself into a decline through the pains and the sorrows.
> Thou art a stranger housed in a body of the earth
> Defiled, how long therefore hast thou been heedless
> Of what thou ignorantly dost?
> Blessed art thou, for the path of journey is open to you.
> Do not entrust your journey to oblivion.[4]

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[1] *The Dīwān of Shams-e Tabīzī:* with an introduction by B. Furūzānfar and A. Dashtī (Tehran 1972), p. 633.
[2] C. R. C. Allberry, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book* (Stuttgart 1938), p. 186.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 291.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

Lo, the time has drawn near
May I return to my habitat
Thou art the way, thou art the way of life eternal.[1]

The gist of the above hymns has been sung by Hāfiz of Shiraz in a beautiful way:

Joyous that day when from this desolate abode, I go
The ease of soul, I seek; and for the sake of the Beloved, I go.

To abandon the world and its attendant errors is the longing of the wandering soul of man:

I have forsaken the world and its errors
I have loved my savior, prayed, fasted
And given alms... [from my youth up]
Because of the hour of need.
Come now my lord, Jesus. And help me
All hail! O busy soul
That hast finished her fight
And subdued the ruling power,
The body and its affections.[2]

It is again uttered by Hāfiz in his mystical couplet:

The world and worldly affairs are nonsense
One thousand times have I sought for.[3]

To a Manichaean gnostic, the inferiority of mundane affairs is such that, in fact, one is not meant not to contaminate oneself with

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 161.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 154.
[3] *Dīvān-e Hāfiz*, ed. by Qazvīnī and Ghanī (Tehran 1993), p. 214.

the darkness and material forces; but since it has been preordained for the soul to become a prisoner of darkness, the ascension to the empyrean and to the heavenly domain has been the desire of every gnostic ascetic:

> I have not been mingled with the mixture of the matter
> For, it is a thing that perishes,
> Thy good fight I have set myself
> To strip myself of the body of destruction,
> The habitation of the powers of death
> And transcend on high to thy aeons (thy Paradise Realm)
> From which I was once separated.[1]

Now we shall see from the viewpoint of the above discussed themes to which one of the two prevailing gnostic systems the first mystics of the Islamic era, *inter alia*, Rūmī were inclined to. We will also examine the ways whereby the gnostic asceticism penetrated into the realm of Muslim mysticism, especially during the seventh century AH / thirteenth century AD.

The majority of the mystics of the Muslim era followed the Syro-Egyptian Gnosticism rather than the Manichaean Gnosticism of Iran, for the Syro-Egyptian Gnosticism was more akin to the monotheistic spirit of Islam than to the duality and amalgamation of light and darkness of Mani, which is a far cry from the unity of the world.

Naturally, the selection of Syro-Egyptian gnostic ideas was easier, for these ideas had a mystical aspect and had not acquired the form of a popular and consummate religion like Manichaeism, whereas Manichaeism had acquired the status of an independent religion during the third century AD and was in vogue up to the ninth and in some areas up to the twelfth century AD. Of course,

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

this does not mean that the Manichaean ideas had no impact on the Iranian culture. Manichaeism survived through the survivors of Mazdaism and through a number of sects, *inter alia*, a heretic sect, which had emerged under the impact of Mazdaism.

According to the Gnostics of the Syrian school, the soul is subject to fall, but according to Manichaeism, a portion of the light or heavenly soul becomes captive in the battle of the forces of darkness and the gods of light. The Syrian school tries to ascribe the dual existence (good and evil, soul and matter) to the single Divine source. According to this school, the whole of existence, whether the world of matter or the world of spirit has a single source, and this destruction and ignorance is part of the luminous soul, which has been isolated from its Divine source. Manichaeism, on the contrary, is based on the eternal separation of matter and soul, and of light and darkness.

With the help of Hermetic ideas, the Syro-Egyptian Gnostic school was able to establish its influence among the Muslims. Its widespread influence was observed in some of the main religious centers of Islam, viz., Baghdad and Harran from the second century AH / eight century AD onwards. The hermetic ideas which had a Gnostic foundation were imbibed by the mystics of Islam, especially, by the Shi'ite mystics; thus one can trace the continuation of pre-Islamic mysticism in the initial periods of Islam, which reached its apogee and flourished during the seventh and eighth century AH / thirteenth and fourteenth century AD.

The liberation of the soul imprisoned in matter is conditional on the awareness and wisdom, "As in the macrocosm, man is a prisoner between the seven firmaments; so inside our body, in microcosm, this celestial Pneuma is incarcerated in the seven-fold prison of our spirit, which has its celestial source. If this incarcerated spirit does not attain awareness and gnosis, it is so

embroiled in the darkness of the body as to know nothing of itself."[1]

Rūmī made this liberation conditional on the elixir of love, without which man remained imprisoned in the prison of the body like a bird without plumage:

> When love has no fear of him
> He will remain fearless like a bird
> The body of the dust ascended heavenwards because of love
> The mountain came into dance
> Everything is a beloved and the lover a veil
> The living is a beloved and the lover dead
> Our plumage is his noose of love
> He will drag her by the hair homewards.[2]

It is evident that the awareness and gnosis are attained through illumination and spiritual discoveries, like the light of love which shines on the heart of the traveler and all of a sudden redeems the soul from the fold of darkness and takes it to the realm of light.

The theme of a caged bird, a symbol for the soul, is also mentioned in Manichaean hymns:

> Like a bird in snares, so also am I
> While I am in the body of death
> I have not been a servant of Ahriman
> Pluck my feathers, be ashamed...[3]

The bird of the celestial garden which we find here and there in the poems of Rūmī and other mystics, is the symbol for the virtuous soul or spirit, meaning that the virtuous spirit or soul finds itself essentially with plumage which is flying towards its native

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[1] M. Bahār and Esmailpour, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
[2] J. M. Mowlavi, *op. cit.*, p. 246.
[3] C. R. C. Allberry, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

place, the celestial garden. We can find glimpses of this winged creature in the works of Suhrawardī, Avecinna and Ghazzālī as well as in the Manṭiq al-Ṭayr of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār.[1]

The allegory of the bird in the gnostic hymns is sometimes given as the allegory of a sheep caught in the grip of matter or the forces of darkness:

> Like sheep that have no shepherd
> Matter and her sons divided me up
> Amongst them, they burnt me in their fire
> They gave me a bitter face.[2]

This rigid and bitter face points to the earthen frame or body, which is rigid and unclean according to the Manichaean gnostics, and ought to be replaced with the attire of light.

> I am the light that shines forth
> That gives joy to souls
> I am the life of the world
> I am the sap of all trees
> I am sweet water that is beneath the sons of matter
> O Soul, raise thy eyes to the heights
> And contemplate thy bonds...[3]

It is the possession of the essence of wisdom that enables the virtuous spirit to travel towards the firmament and to become free from the prison and cast off the veil of matter and stigma of defiling and to attain union with God by transcending the material

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[1] Concerning the symbolism of the bird in mythology and mystical literature, see J. Sattārī, *An Introduction to Mystical Symbolism* (Tehran 1993), pp. 119, 122-123; also see T. Pūrnāmdārīyān, *op. cit.* (Tehran 1989).
[2] C. R. C. Allberry, *op. cit.*, Psalm no. 246.
[3] *Ibid.*, Psalm no. 246.

world. This Gnostic theme can be observed beautifully in the prologue to the Mathnawi:

> Dost thou know why the mirror of thy soul reflects nothing?
> Because the rust is not cleared from its face
> The mirror is separate from the color of adornment
> The ray of light is the sun of God
> Clean the rust off his face
> Then, understand that light
> With the ear of your heart, hearken to this truth
> So you may get out of darkness.[1]

This 'ray of light of God's sun' has been manifested in gnostic poetry as the eternal light, which belongs to the very land of light, i.e. the land of the eminent Father of Greatness or Zurwān, a portion of which has come into this material world through the lesser gods of light.

The imprisonment of light has been described in *Manichaean Psalms* as the incarceration of a boat or ship bearing the light-particles which is besieged by the King of Darkness and his band; thus the light mingles with the darkness. The mission of man is to isolate and liberate himself from his amalgamation, to liberate his inner light through the attainment of gnostic wisdom, to proceed towards the moon and the sun via the Milky Way and thence towards the Paradise of Light, to ascend the Upper Paradise or the Paradise of Light, to present himself before the gods of light and to become part of the absolute light:

> His light is down, up and right
> On His head, shoulders like a crown.

[1] J. M. Mowlavi, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

Or according to another interpretation of Rūmī, it is to become a celestial, imaginary and untraceable substance:

> I shall pass by the angels like birds
> I shall become what will come within the imagination.

As stated above, the only way of redemption is to achieve awareness about the transcendence and alienation of the divine world from this material world. Therefore, in order to be redeemed, man perforce has to recognize the Transcendental God beyond this material and horrible world. Man must recognize Him, must identify Him and must discover his own inner being and must know his source of origin, his place of imprisonment and his future station:

> Whence have I come, for what have I come?
> Where am I going? Why do you not show me my home?

The prerequisite to this wisdom is the discovery of gnostic and ascetic intuition for the attainment of the Truth.

According to the gnostics preceding Mani, the isolation of divine substance or soul had occurred before the creation of the material world. The Messenger of God from the Paradise of Light strove to liberate this soul, but Ahreman and the demons created the material world and man in order to imprison this isolated soul in the body of this world and in the body of man. This fact indicates that the Muslim wisdom, rejecting this point, has played a vital role in the evolution process of Gnosticism. From its very maturity and fostering, i.e. from the second and third century AD, up to its climax and spread in the Muslim world, Gnosticism has traversed a long way and has undergone a process of change during the lapse of time without losing its main substance.

In this far-reaching movement, the Sabeans or Mandaean gnostics, too, had their role in the formation of Islamic mysticism.

Mandaeans have numerous common aspects with the topics of the prologue to the *Mathnawī* and with its corresponding themes in Manichaean songs and hymns. Here we will mention only two examples of Mandaean gnostic hymns:

> Living knowledge came to me
> It cried and opened my eyes
> Woke up my spirit
> Woke the god of secrets
> Raised man from among the dead
> And woke me from sleep
> Life had woken in me.[1]

Or, concerning the redemption of the soul from its worldly abode, it says:

> Hail to thee, hail to thee, O Soul!
> Thou hast fled the world
> From corruption
> Thou hast left the body to the world
> The world is a wicked place
> Arise! Arise! O Soul!
> Come back to the former abode
> To where thou hast come.[2]

The other gnostic allegory is that of pearl, shell and treasure. In the gnostic texts, pearl has the figurative form and is related to the soul of man. In Manichaean texts, pearl is the very light imprisoned in the shell. Shell is the prison, and pearl the prisoner. Thus, if the soul is the very pearl, then it has to be searched for in the ocean. It is because of this that in Manichaeism the struggle of

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[1] A. Esmailpour, *Myth: Symbolic Expression* (Tehran 1998), p. 203.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

soul is likened to the 'divers' who probe into the depths of the ocean (depth of wisdom) to search and find valuable treasures. The goal of Manichaeism is not only the 'liberation of pearls' from the prison of the material through the fragile attire of the body, and 'bringing togrther of spirits' or 'collecting spirits' which are like parts of a body, but their everlasting purification as well.[1]

Besides the allegory of pearl, the symbol of treasure, too, has its importance for Manichaean vision in the description of the Living Spirit. He is the essence of all the scattered pieces of light imprisoned in the world. Even the Manichaean angels are called *radanīn* (jewels).

In the *Mathnawī*, too, shell and pearl are referred to repeatedly. In fact, shell is mentioned and discussed 19 times and pearl 135 times throughout the *Mathnawī*, such as:

> The small and the big pearls are out
> With the shell lives that big treasure.[2]

Or in the prologue to the *Mathnawī*:

> The pitcher of my eye was not filled greedily
> The shell was not convinced, was not filled with pearls.

The *Mathnawī* has several instances. Of these we shall only cite the following as samples:

> One put a pearl in the heart
> He put in the seas and the oceans.[3]

> You said there was a sea within him

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[1] Cf. I. Gardner, *The Kephalaia of the Teacher* (Leiden 1995), p. 204.
[2] *The Mathnawī*, Book I, p. 102, verse 17.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 72, verse 18.

A whole treasure was within his heart.[1]

The light of that pearl is shining out
It has been relieved of these chains.[2]

The metaphor of pearl and shell has a long history in mystical poetry, and they have been mentioned in the ancient poetical works. The pearl is the prevailing metaphor and allegory used for narrating one of the most important mystical themes common in the works of gnostics, Manichaeans, the early Christian ascetics and the Sufi poets. Perhaps we can find its most beautiful expression in the following couplet of Hāfiz, the great Iranian poet:

The pearl that was out of the oyster of time and space abode (universe)
It was sought by the lost beings of the coastline.[3]

One of the gnostic allegorical songs, 'The Song of the Pearl', composed by Judah Thomas, was mentiond in *The Acts of Thomas* (third century AD), also called *The Raiment of Pride*. According to this allegory, the pearl has fallen into the mouth of the python, and the seeker ought to take it out of the mouth of the python and thereby liberate the soul or light imprisoned in the material world:

Hail to thee, our son in Egypt
Arise from the deep slumber
And hearken to my words
Remember thou art the prince
Remember the pearl
For which thou hastened towards Egypt.[4]

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[1] *Ibid.*, Book II, p. 319, verse 8.
[2] *Ibid.*, Book V, p. 835.
[3] *Dīvān-e Hāfiz*, ed. by Qazvīnī and Ghanī (Tehran 1993), p. 101.
[4] R. Haardt, *Gnosis* (Leiden 1971), pp. 161-167.

The allegory of the merchant, merchandise and treasure describes the position of an apostle or ascetic struggling for the redemption and deliverance of the soul. The gnostic texts even went further to consider the merchant figuratively as Father of the kingdom of God, who possessing tremendous wealth, out of that treasure, kept only the solitary pearl which was a part of the holy and eternal soul:

> The Father of the Kingdom is like a merchant
> Who found treasures and pearls
> He was an intelligent merchant
> He sold all his property
> He possessed only the pearl
> You are looking for a wealth
> Which is not to be exhausted
> A wealth which the blow flies won't gnaw
> And the worms won't corrupt.[1]

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the foregoing that the gnostic Manichaean hymns, the gnostic-mystical themes of early Christianity and Muslim mystical works and thought have several common features, which is an indication of the continuity of the mystical tradition in the broad realm of Christianity, Manichaeism and Islam. Most Iranian scholars, such as the late Professor Ebrāhīm Pūrdāwūd, Malik al-Sho'arā Bahār and Mohammad Mo'īn, mostly emphasized the impact of Zoroastrianism and Mazdaism on Persian culture and literature, while others have pursued research on the gnostic Manichaean impact to a lesser degree. Although the idea of permeation of

[1] *The Gospel of Thomas*, see A. Esmailpour, *Myth: Symbolic Expression* (Tehran 1998), pp. 196-197.

gnostic themes into Islamic mysticism and the manner in which these themes permeated Iranian and Muslim culture through the Christian and Manichaean ascetics is a new trend in literary and mystic research, the continuation of deep, sustained and steady research might bring about a profound change in the study of mystical works.

List of the Texts

1 = M 21
2 = M 981
3 = M 991
4 = M 7980
5 = M 7981
6 = M 7982
7 = M 7983
8 = M 7984
9 = M 7980
10 = M 7981
11 = M 7982
12 = M 533
13 = M 507
14 = M 5877, M 710
15 = M 741
16 = M 741 V
17 = S 13 + S 9 Rii 30
18 = M 100, 10012-16, 1018, 1024, 1029, 1031
19 = M 1103, 1025
20 = M 1021
21 = M 1030, M1014
22 = M 1027, M1007
23 = M 1009
24 = M 1004, 1005, 1008, 1010
25 = M 1002, 1006, 1017, 1023, 1028, 9000
26 = M 1011
27 = M 1022, M 1020
28 = M 1019
29 = M 100
30 = M 819, M 2154
31 = M 853

32 = M 263f, 292, 5228
33 = M 765 I
34 = M 1741
35 = M 316 + 801d, M 8400, M211 + 500g + 2203 + 2205 + 3840, M 2082
36 = M 351
37 = M 384, 2067, 4517, 5190, 5682
38 = M 308a, M 308b
39 = M 99
40 = M 5932
41 = M 183, M 3404 + M 354, M 98
42 = M 8802
43 = M 871
44 = M 2098
45 = M 1208
46 = M 506
47 = M 715d
48 = M 4500, M 4501, M 5567, M 5566
49 = M 2309
50 = M 8280
51 = M 5900
52 = M 8101
53 = M 101, M911
54 = M 178a
55 = M 178b
56 = M 363
57 = MPB (Manichaean Psalm-Book), 1-3
58 = MPB, 9-11
59 = MPB, 57
60 = MPB, 136-139
61 = MPB, 140-142
62 = MPB, 148-9
63 = MPB, 159-160

64 = MPB, 161
65 = MPB, 203-205
66 = MPB, 207-209
67 = MPB, 209-210
68 = MPB, 211-212
69 = MPB, 212-213
70 = Keph (Kephalaia), II, 171, 92-3, 117
71 = Keph, I, 244
72 = Keph, I, 246
73 = Keph, I, 251-3
74 = Keph, I, 268-9
75 = Hom (Homilien), 7
76 = Hom, 39
77 = Hom, 40
78 = Hom, 21
79 = Keph, I, 41
80 = MDC (Manichaische Dogmatik aus Chinesischen), 949
81 = CH (Chinese Hymnscroll), 196-7
82 = CH, 185-197
83 = CH, 176
84 = MCML (Manichaean Confessional Mirror for the Laity), 149
85 = MCML, 151
86 = al-Fihrist, 329-31
87 = al-Fihrist, 331-32
88 = al-Fihrist, 332
89 = al-Fihrist, 3332-33
90 = al-Milal wal-Nihal, 192
91 = Malil-Hind, 26
92 = Ya'qubi, I, 129
93 = Tabsirat al-Ulum, Mutun: 502-4
94-97 = Gnosis, 289-95
98-100 = Gnosis, 295-301

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